

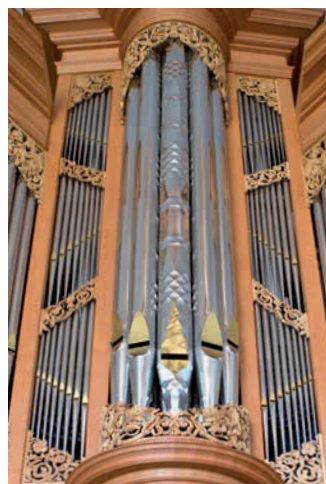
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February 2020

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OUT OF THE ASHES

When John Brombaugh's Opus 4 was destroyed by fire, Paul Fritts responded with imagination

► see page 30

ERIC WHITACRE

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Meet Papagena, the all-female vocal consort

SIR STEPHEN CLEOBURY

King's College, Cambridge's music director remembered

'ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL'

Step behind the scenes at the Casavant Frères workshop



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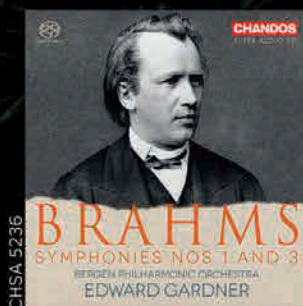
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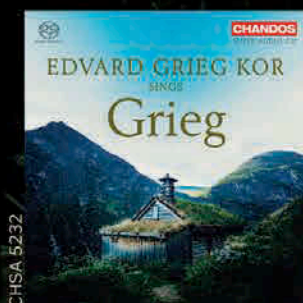
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STAY IN THE KNOW



Collateral damage

The news of Martin Baker's resignation as Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, which came through just a few days before this issue's press day, is cause for sadness in many respects, not least starting with the rather peremptory statement released by the RC Diocese of Westminster on 8 January:

Yesterday it was announced: 'It is with regret that we announce the resignation of Martin Baker as Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral with effect from 31 December 2019. We take the opportunity to thank him for his dedication and service over the past two decades and wish him the very best in his future career.'

Today the Diocese will start to address these new circumstances created by Mr Baker's resignation. A further announcement will be made in the coming weeks.

Although no explanation is given, from the economy of the announcement – which appears to underestimate the quality of what Baker has achieved musically since his appointment in 2000 – it may be surmised that the reason behind this resignation is disagreement over the changes that have taken place at Westminster Cathedral Choir School, on which we reported in July 2019. Choristers no longer board throughout the full week, but are now sent home on Friday afternoons, returning in time for Sunday Mass, effectively limiting the chorister catchment area from international to within commuting distance



of London, and reducing the number of Masses at which the choristers sing.

A statement given at the time by the chair of the board of governors, David Heminway, said, 'These modest changes are designed to make the life-changing opportunities for choristers at WCCS more attractive to modern parents, who wish to spend time with their children at the weekends, and for whom 24/7

boarding is no longer an appealing option. They are also designed to strengthen and support the brilliant work of Westminster Cathedral Choir.'

That this decision was made without consultation with the music department, however, suggested a disregard for the musicians' professionalism, an impression reinforced by the ignoring of subsequent petitions made by music staff and choristers' parents – and supported by former Master of Music Colin Mawby – for the School to reconsider.

Westminster Cathedral Choir has a long and distinguished record. Since its official institution in 1902 under Richard Terry, its Masters of Music have included George Malcolm, Colin Mawby, Stephen Cleobury, David Hill and James O'Donnell. It is now the leading RC cathedral choir in the world, and since his appointment in 2000, Martin Baker has continued to raise its standard and its international profile through tours and recordings. His departure, and the manner of it, is a huge loss of talent that could have been avoided and is much to be regretted.

Maggie Hamilton

Choir & Organ shines a global spotlight on two distinctive fields of creativity, celebrating inventiveness and excellence in all their forms.

We aim to inspire our readers through giving a platform to conductors, organists, composers, and choirs of every kind; and by showcasing the imaginative craft of pipe organ building across the centuries, critiquing new organs and tackling ethics in restoring historic instruments.

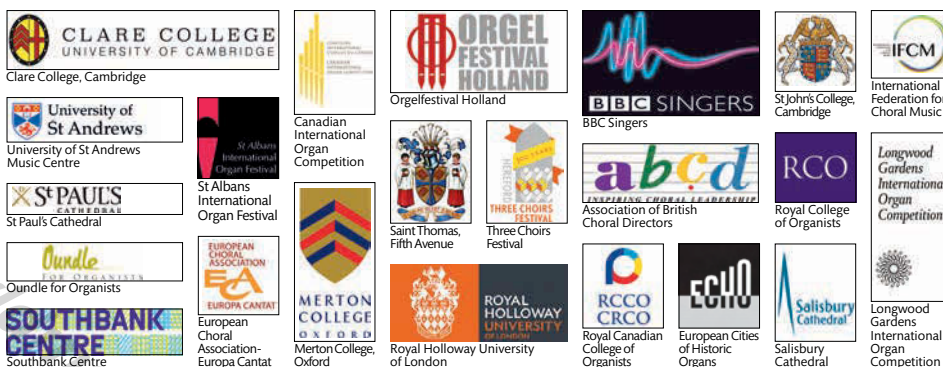
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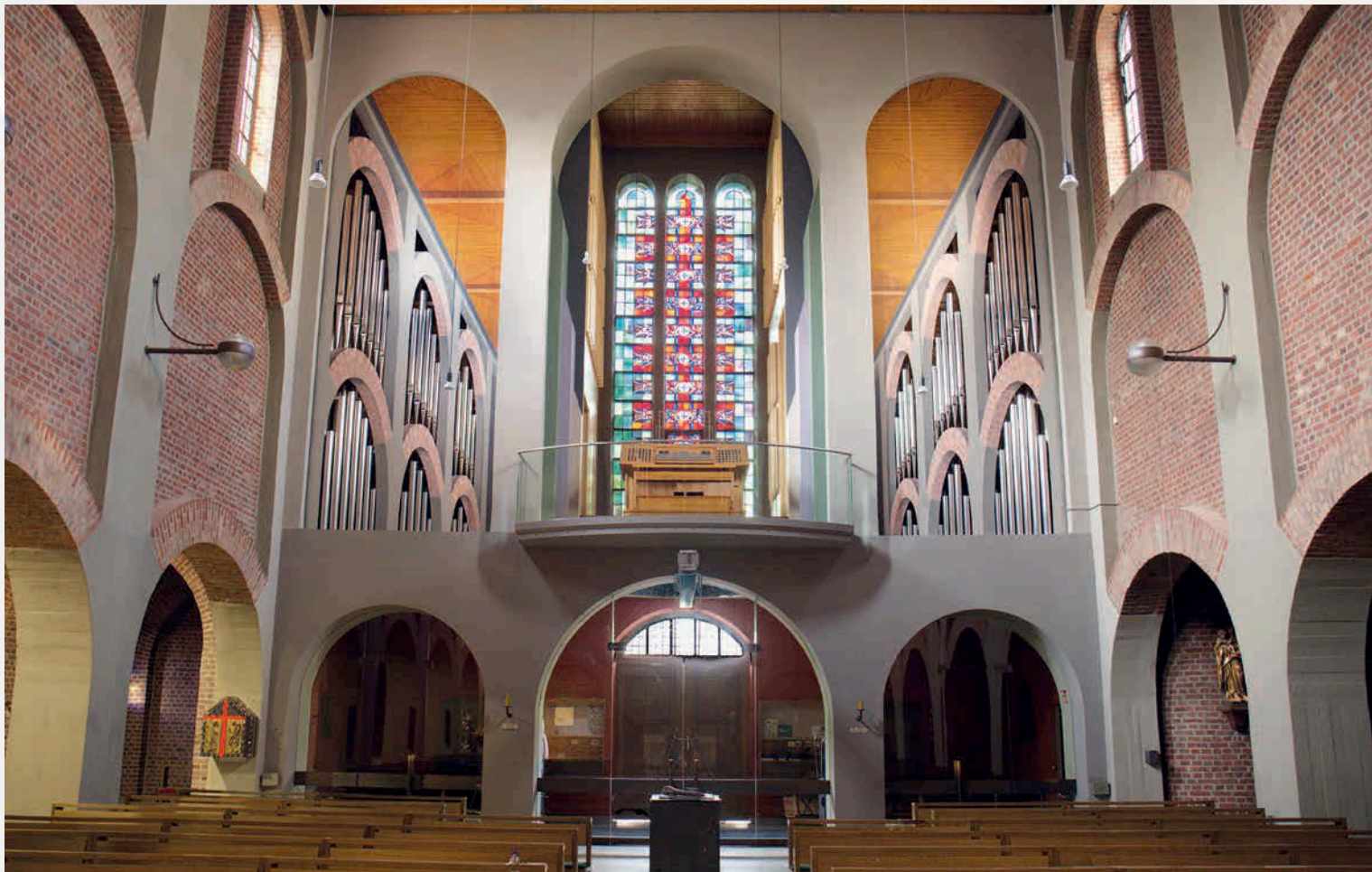
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2019

Hauptwerk	I.	C - c4	Positiv (expr.)	II.	C - c4	Récit (expr.)	III.	C - c4	Pedal	C - g1
Principal		16'	Bourdon		16'	Cor de Chamois		16'	Untersatz	32'
Principal		8'	Principal		8'	Bourdon		8'	Principal	16'
Gedackt		8'	Holzgedackt		8'	Flûte		8'	Subbass	16'
Flûte harm.		8'	Salicional		8'	Viole		8'	Principal	8'
Viola da Gamba		8'	Unda maris		8'	Aeoline		8'	Gedackt	8'
Octave		4'	Prestant		4'	Voix céleste		8'	Cello	8'
Blockflöte		4'	Rohrflöte		4'	Principal		4'	Flöte	4'
Quinte		2 2/3'	Sesquialtera	II	2 2/3'	Fugara		4'	Bombarde	16'
Superoctave		2'	Doublette		2'	Flûte trav.		4'	Fagott	16'
Mixtur major	V	2'	Larigot		1 1/3'	Nazard		2 2/3'	Posaune	8'
Mixtur minor	IV -V 1	1 1/3'	Scharff	IV	1'	Octavin		2'	Klarine	4'
Cornet	V	8'	Krummhorn		8'	Tierce		1 3/5'		
Trompete		16'	Klarinette		8'	Piccolo		1'		
Trompete		8'	Tremulant			Fourniture	III-V	2 2/3'		
						Basson		16'		
						Trompette harm.		8'		
						Hautbois		8'		
						Clairon harm.		4'		
						Voix humaine		8'		
						Tremolo				

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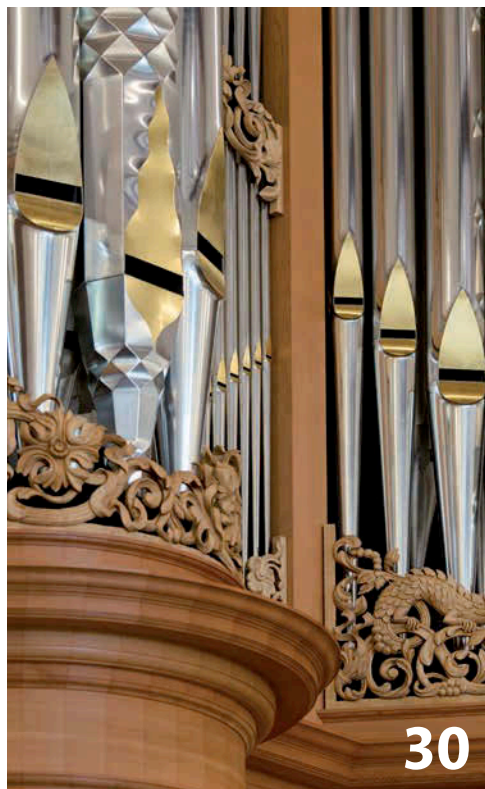
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COLIN MAWBY 1936-2019

BENJAMIN DAHLHOFF



▲ Organist, conductor and composer: Colin Mawby

ORGANIST, CHORAL CONDUCTOR AND COMPOSER COLIN MAWBY died on 24 November 2019, aged 83.

As a boy, Mawby was a chorister at Westminster Cathedral under George Malcolm, before going on to study at the Royal College of Music (RCM) with Richard Latham, John Churchill and Gordon Jacob.

After posts at Portsmouth Cathedral and St Ann's, Vauxhall, in 1959 Mawby returned to Westminster Cathedral as assistant organist, succeeding Francis Cameron as master of the music two years later. In 1975 he left to take up a professorship at Trinity College of Music, where he stayed until 1981, when he moved to Dublin, having been appointed director of the National Chamber Choir of Ireland. During his time in Dublin, he was also choral director at Radio Telefís Éireann, and founded the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir, the RTÉ children's choir and the RTÉ Chamber Choir. He retired to East Anglia in 2001.

His compositional canon includes a large collection of choral works, both sacred and secular, including motets, hymn settings, operas for young people, five song cycles and over 50 Masses. He also wrote an extensive range of organ music. In 2004, he was awarded the Knighthood of St Gregory by Pope Benedict XVI for his services to church music.

The March issue of C&O will include a tribute to Colin Mawby.

TURNING 40 – THE VASARI SINGERS

LONDON-BASED CHAMBER CHOIR THE VASARI SINGERS celebrates its 40th anniversary this year with a series of events beginning in February.

The 2020 celebrations get under way with services at Canterbury Cathedral on 15-16 February, followed by a come-and-sing workshop on 21 March featuring music in 40 parts. On 18-19 and 23 April, the choir performs services and a concert in Southwell Minster and Evensong at Westminster Abbey.

The summer months see the choir's Gala Anniversary Concert at St Paul's, Knightbridge, at which the singers will perform works by Tallis, Striggio, Jackson, Dove, MacMillan and Clucas.

At the beginning of November, the choir launches its 40th birthday CD, *Heaven Full of Stars*, on Naxos, presenting contemporary choral music, while on 18 December, the year's events conclude with Christmas with Vasari: 40th Anniversary Celebration at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, London.

Under the direction of founder Jeremy Backhouse, the choir is committed to commissioning and performing British music, which has resulted in over 30 new works, including from past and present patrons Stephen Barlow, Gabriel Jackson

and Ward Swingle. Alongside its core of experienced singers, the choir also encourages younger singers to join through subsidies and scholarships.

Backhouse told *C&O*, 'The varied events of our anniversary year demonstrate our commitment to contemporary choral music,

through both commissioning and recording, as well as confirming our reputation for passionate and vivid performances, bringing the music off the page and communicating to our audiences the soul behind the notes.'

Further information about the choir and its 2020 events can be found at vasarisingers.org.

▼ The Vasari Singers launch their 40th anniversary celebrations 15 February at Canterbury Cathedral



MATT PEREIRA

CAVAILLÉ-COLL IN CATALONIA

ANDREY NIKITIN



▲ The Cavaillé-Coll organ moves from Sacred Heart Convent (below) to the crypt in Barcelona's basilica (above)

THE ONLY CAVAILLÉ-COLL ORGAN IN CATALONIA has been donated by nuns to Barcelona's Sagrada Família and will be placed in the crypt beside the tomb of the basilica's architect, Antoni Gaudí.

Built in 1896 in Paris, the instrument is being transferred from the Sacred Heart of Jesus convent in Barcelona to replace the crypt's 1926 organ, which was damaged beyond repair during the Spanish civil war in 1936, as were an estimated 90 per cent of the city's organs.

The organ is in the same neo-gothic style as the crypt and has 10 registers and 548 pipes. It is currently being restored by Albert Blancafort in a €150,000 project, which will be completed in September 2020.

Blancafort told *C&O*, 'The organ's build and style fit perfectly in the crypt: both are built in the same neo-gothic style and the organ fits into the same space that housed the previous instrument. It is also musically similar in style, sharing with it a romantic build, two manuals and swell box. The sound of the Cavaillé-Coll organ is wide and welcoming, ideal for both liturgical choir accompaniment and concerts. At the end of



ORGUESBLANCAFORT.COM

this project, the crypt of La Sagrada Família will have an instrument again and Barcelona will restore this jewel of organ building, making it available for everyone to enjoy.'

Funds are being raised through a press sponsorship campaign, calling on people to donate to the Sagrada Família crypt. Individuals who contribute €50 or more will see their name inscribed on a commemorative plaque located in the crypt.

The Sagrada Família is one of Gaudí's many modernist designs in the city, the construction having begun in 1882 and the building remaining unfinished today. sagradafamilia.org, orguedelacrypta.cat

IN BRIEF

Correction: *The Arc in the Sky* was released on Navona, not Nanova, as stated in our article about the GRAMMY nominations in the January issue.

Martin Baker has resigned as master of music at Westminster Cathedral, having served in the role since 2000. A brief statement from the diocese reported that the change took effect on New Year's Eve. During his career, Baker dedicated himself to the world-renowned cathedral choir. westminstercathedral.org.uk.

After three years of research, Modartt has released a virtual pipe organ – **Organteq**. Inspired by Cavaillé-Coll's organs, it offers over 1,000 pipes, assigned to three-manual keyboards with a five-octave range. Organteq is available for MacOS (10.7 or later), Windows (7 or later) and Linux (x86). organteq.com

The a cappella group from King's Ely – the **King's Barbers** – has released its first commercial CD, with all profits going to the linked charity, the Bethesda Life Centre boys' orphanage in Goa. The group, whose members are all former cathedral or college choir choristers, won the National Youth a Cappella Competition in 2018. The album is available from King's Ely Senior, Ely: bit.ly/35reu1P.

In November 2019, **Flentrop Orgelbouw** signed a contract for a new continuo organ for the Utrecht Student Choir and Orchestra (USKO). The organ builders were inspired by instruments from the Berlin organ building tradition. flentrop.nl

On New Year's Eve 2019, vandals threw heavy stones at the windows of **St Thomas Church in Leipzig**, Germany, the historically significant church at which J.S. Bach was Kantor from 1723 to 1750. Damages to the fabric included stained-glass windows and art nouveau panes. Police have launched an investigation.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



INSPIRING CHORAL LEADERSHIP

Spring Initial Course

21 Mar, 25 Apr, 13 Jun and 4 Jul, London

Tutors include Lucy Griffiths and Mark Jordan. The course is designed to lay firm foundations for anyone who has an interest in learning to lead singing of any kind, or who has recently started to conduct a choir.

'Conductor Toolkit' Weekend

28-29 Mar, Leeds

Presenters on 28 Mar include Kevin O'Carroll covering voicing and blend, while on 29 Mar, Jordan Travis expands on the ageing voice, as well as considering vocal technique and effective choral warm-ups. Booking opens soon – weekend and day tickets available.

Emerging/Progressive Course

14-15 Mar, 6-7 Jun, 12-13 Sep, London

The Emerging Course is designed for those with experience in singing and/or conducting wishing to develop existing skills, while the Progressive Course is for those who work with at least one choir on a regular basis and wish to further develop their technique.

Basic Conducting Skills Day

16 May, Leeds

This popular day, led by Sue Hollingworth, is for new conductors, or those with some experience who want to back it up with training. Booking opens soon.

35th Annual Convention: The *abcd* Choral Leaders' Festival

28-30 Aug, Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire

Save the date.

For details of all events, including online booking where applicable, and general information about *abcd*, visit abcd.org.uk

CHORAL PARTNERSHIP



NICK RUTTER

▲ The Tallis Scholars invest in new talent by partnering with the National Youth Chamber Choir

THE TALLIS SCHOLARS ARE TO LAUNCH A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL YOUTH CHAMBER CHOIR (NYCC) in a performance on 16 February at Saffron Hall, in Essex.

The programme will include Thomas Tallis's 40-part motet *Spem in alium*, Allegri's *Miserere* and works by Byrd, Pärt and Croce. Their partnership will involve shared concert platforms, observing professional rehearsals, UK-wide performances, and masterclasses from the Tallis Scholars' founder-director Peter Phillips.

Ben Parry, artistic director and principal conductor of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain (NYCGB), said, 'NYCGB's new performance partnership scheme is just another brilliant initiative for our members to experience unbeatable training and performance opportunities with some of the world's most distinguished professional musicians ... This is certainly a highlight of our 2019-20 season.'

A new singer with the Tallis Scholars, Ellie Sperling, will be performing in this concert, having been in NYCGB's Fellowship in 2018, which she described as 'a truly fantastic experience'. While a member of the Fellowship, she heard the Tallis Scholars perform for the first time; she told *C&O*, 'Immediately, I was blown away by the precision of the music, and the power coming from just ten voices ... Peter and the group are all inspiring individuals, and are also some of the loveliest people to be around.' Since then, Sperling has performed in more than ten concerts and two radio broadcasts with the Tallis Scholars.

For four decades, the Tallis Scholars have been bringing renaissance music to audiences in churches, cathedrals and elsewhere. The NYCC is the National Youth Choir's elite ensemble, often serving as a springboard for professional musical careers. saffronhall.com

OrganPromotion is now taking bookings for the Organ Tour Paris, which takes place from 15-19 Apr. The tour takes in 10 organs, including viewings, recitals, lectures and courses, featuring the work of Louis Vierne (r), to mark his 150th birth anniversary, and Widor, Franck and Bériot. Suitable for organ fans and professionals, prices range from €590 to €640 with accommodation, or €330 without. bit.ly/2tMFbR3



COURTESY/ROLIN SMITH

VOICING AT CANTERBURY

VOICING IS UNDERWAY AT CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL, with Harrison & Harrison's new Quire Organ set to be completed this Easter.

From 6 January to the end of February 2020, voicing will take place every day from 1pm to 1am, except on Sundays. Having begun at the end of 2017, the project largely replaces the 1886 Father Willis organ, which was originally designed with a pioneering form of electro-pneumatic action. Since then, the organ has been altered by Norman & Beard and Henry Willis & Sons, with a more significant rebuild taking place in 1979 by N.P. Mander.

Some of the original Father Willis pipework remains on the south side of the quire, and will form the backbone of the new four-manual instrument. Work on the south side began in summer 2019; new pipes were installed on the north side the previous summer. A new console will be situated in a new organ loft in the north quire aisle, which also presents an opportunity to repair historic stone, timber and stained glass in the quire.

The new organ will have over 80 stops and more than 6,000 pipes, making it one of the largest cathedral organs in Europe, and will include six divisions: Pedal, Choir, Great, Swell, Solo and Transept. Harrison & Harrison's managing director, Andrew Reid, told *C&O*, 'We look forward to completing the Quire Organ of Canterbury Cathedral, giving voice once again to the historic Father Willis pipework within a broader scheme of 83 stops, complete with three 32ft ranks, a new Transept division and largely new Choir and enclosed Solo organs.'

Dr Robert Willis, the Dean of Canterbury, said, 'This project will not only restore the Cathedral organ, but also bring back some of the quality and beauty of the original Henry Willis instrument.'

With funds being raised by the Canterbury Cathedral Trust, the project takes place between two milestones for the cathedral – its 30th anniversary as part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018, and the Lambeth Conference of Bishops in July 2020. harrisonorgans.com, canterbury-cathedral.org

▼ The new Harrison & Harrison Quire Organ at Canterbury Cathedral will have over 80 stops and 6,000 pipes



EVENTS



▲ Cupertinos performs in London on 18 Feb

The Portuguese vocal ensemble **Cupertinos** makes its UK debut at Cadogan Hall, London, on 18 Feb. Under the direction of Luís Toscano, the choir presents a programme of 16th- and 17th-century Portuguese polyphony, incorporating liturgies of Lent and of the Dead. cadoganhall.com

The **34th IAO London Organ Day** will be held in Islington at Union Chapel, Compton Terrace, and St John's, Duncan Terrace, on 29 Feb. Entitled 'Bach Kaleidoscope', the event charts Bach performance from 1820 to 2020, featuring recitals by Adrian Gunning, Martin Baker and Erwan Plaquin, winner of the Académie André Marchal organ competition in October 2018. iao.org.uk

As part of its 500th anniversary celebrations, the **Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula, HM Tower of London** holds three lectures in February. On 4 Feb, Richard Chartres presents 'The Chapel Royal and the Reformation'; on 11 Feb, Tracy Borman uncovers 'Henry VIII and the Men Who Made Him'; and on 18 Feb, Alison Weir brings 'The Lady in the Tower: The Fall of Anne Boleyn.' hrp.org.uk

The **Royal College of Organists (RCO)** presents six events this month, including an Advanced Performance Class with Iain Quinn (4 Feb); Choosing and Performing Voluntaries and The RCO Tudor Organs and their Music (8 Feb); Teach the Organ! – Class 3 (15 Feb); Fugal Techniques for ARCO and FRCO with Frederick Stocken (15 Feb); and Hymn and Worship Song Playing (29 Feb). rco.org.uk



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Photo courtesy of Eric Harrison



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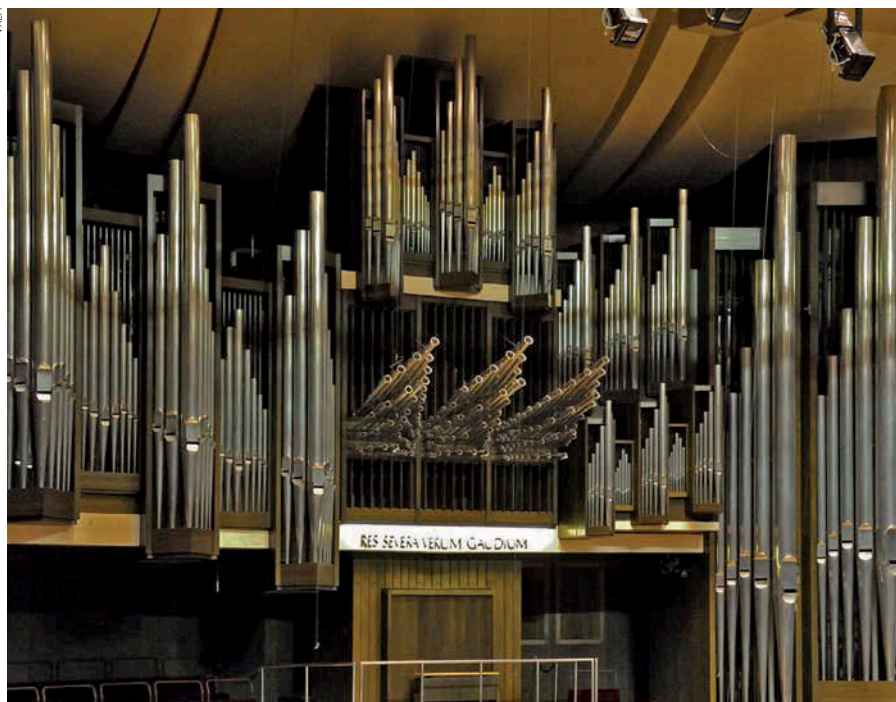
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VOXA



▲ The organ in the Leipzig Gewandhaus is one of Schuke's most significant instruments

ALEXANDER SCHUKE ORGAN BUILDERS CELEBRATE THEIR BICENTENARY in 2020, following 200 years of craftsmanship and seven generations of organ builders.

The company was founded in Potsdam, Germany, in 1820 by organ builder Gottlieb Heise, whose most famous instruments include those designed for the Lehniner Klosterkirche St Marien and Potsdam's St Nikolaikirche.

Heise was followed by two generations of the Gesell family, before Alexander Schuke took over the company in 1894 following the death of Carl Eduard Gesell, with whom he was a student. Schuke turned it into the Alexander Schuke Organ Building Institute Potsdam, and 140 organs were built during his lifetime.

Through a turbulent period of political unrest and war, the company remained in

the Schuke family, with Matthias Schuke successfully completing the course to become a master organ builder in 1988. In 2006, his youngest son, Michael, began his training, receiving his master certificate in 2016. Schuke's second son, Johannes, joined the business in 2017, having majored in civil engineering in Berlin. In 2018, Matthias handed over the management of the company to both his sons.

Schuke's significant instruments include the organ in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, originally built in 1981, but expanded by two registers in 2008; Erfurt Cathedral (1992); the main organ and choir organ for Königsberg Cathedral, Kaliningrad, Russia (2008); Bardowick Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul in 2012; and concert halls in Lublin (Poland), Pingtung (Taiwan), and Charkiw (Ukraine). schuke.de



On 9 Feb, the BBC Singers Family Concert will take place in the Milton Court Concert Hall at London's Barbican Centre. Recommended for ages 5+, the fun concert features music from the BBC Singers under the direction of Alexander L'Estrange (I). Standard tickets £10-£16; under 18s, £5. barbican.org.uk

EVENTS

Durham Cathedral Choir and period orchestra The Avison Ensemble will collaborate to perform Monteverdi's Vespers on 2 Feb. Under the direction of Daniel Cook and Pavlo Beznosiuk, the performance is presented as part of Durham Vocal Festival. Tickets £8-£28. durhamcathedral.co.uk

On 22 Feb, **BBC SO Total Immersion: Anders Hillborg** takes place at London's Barbican. The event includes Camilla Lundberg's documentary on the Swedish composer (10.30am), Chamber Music introduced by Hillborg (Milton Court Concert Hall, 1.30pm) and performances by the BBC Singers (St Giles Cripplegate, 4pm) and the BBC Symphony Orchestra (Barbican Hall, 7.30pm). Tickets £37-£50. (See feature, p.50) barbican.org.uk

The second of two talks uncovering the story behind **Salisbury Cathedral's Father Willis organ** will be held on 26 Feb. Entitled 'The Birth of the Willis Organ: A Three Cornered Contest Part 2', the talk from Alan Willis (unrelated) will be based



▲ Salisbury assistant director of music John Challenger, with the Father Willis organ

on letters and documents kept in the Cathedral archive, which have recently been transcribed by archive volunteers. The event is free with no booking required. salisburycathedral.org.uk

The British Institute of Organ Studies will be holding the **Bernard Edmunds Research Conference 2020** on 29 Feb at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham University. Papers on recent research will be presented. bios.org.uk

ASH MILLS

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



▲ 'Something for everyone to enjoy': The Cardinal Vaughan Schola Cantorum celebrates 40 years with a concert at Cadogan Hall, featuring a new work by Roderick Williams

THE CARDINAL VAUGHAN SCHOLA CANTORUM MARKS ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY with a concert at Cadogan Hall and a new work by Roderick Williams on 3 March.

Turning 40 in 2020, Schola Cantorum – the liturgical choir of Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, Kensington – will celebrate with a first performance of a new setting of *Ave maris stella* for choir and orchestra, commissioned for the occasion from Roderick Williams. The performance will also include works by Handel, J.S. Bach, James MacMillan, Widor, Vaughan Williams and American film composer Danny Elfman.

Schola Cantorum and Belgravia Chamber Orchestra will be conducted by the school's

director of music, Scott Price, while Roderick Williams will perform as the baritone soloist in Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs*.

Price told C&O, 'It's been exciting to put together a programme of music that reflects the various things the choir gets up to. As well as the sacred music, we will also be singing extracts from *Tosca*, reflecting the boys' work in the chorus at the Royal Opera and English National Opera over many years. The repertoire also features film score extracts, including a passage from the Oscar-winning score for *Life of Pi*, on which we sang in 2013. We are to be joined by a number of former members of the choir for a performance of Widor's Mass for two choirs, in a very rarely

heard orchestral arrangement. I am hoping there is something for everyone to enjoy.'

Later in its anniversary year, the choir will broadcast Choral Vespers for Ascension on BBC Radio 3 – making them the first state academy choir to lead BBC Choral Evensong – and a tour to Australia.

Schola Cantorum has previously appeared at the BBC Proms and the Aldeburgh Festival, and has featured on several film soundtracks. It has worked alongside The Bach Choir, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Gabrieli Consort and Choir, among others. The school, which is in west central London, is for boys aged 11-18. scholacantorum.co.uk; cadoganhall.com

PREMIERES [RP = REGIONAL PREMIERE]

Eric Whitacre: A Boy and a Girl

Amy Dickson (sax), Exultate Singers/Ogden
8 Feb, St George's, Bristol, UK

Harrison Birtwistle: The Moth Requiem [RP]

Chœur de Radio France/Batič
8 Feb, Maison de la Radio, Paris, France

Rachel Laurin: Variations on a Theme by Sweelinck

Thomas Trotter (org)
10 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, UK

Dobrinka Tabakova: Einstein Considered Light as Waves [RP]

Judith Bingham: I Lift Up Mine Eyes Unto the Hills
Saint Louis Chamber Chorus/Barnes
16 Feb, Second Presbyterian Church, St Louis, Missouri, US

Hans Zender: Angst, Wut und Schrecken

Neue Vocalsolisten, Ensemble Musikfabrik/Rundel
16 Feb, WDR Funkhaus, Wallratzplatz, Cologne, Germany

Anders Hillborg: The Breathing of the World [RP]

BBC Singers/Rasmussen
22 Feb, St Giles Cripplegate, London, UK

Please email items for News and Letters to the Editor for publication in future issues to maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com, or post to The Editor, Choir & Organ, Mark Allen Group, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, UK.

PIANO AT SIBELIUS SUMMER ACADEMY 8.-13.6.2020

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KEVIN LEIGHTON & KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

▲ 'A force of nature': Sir Stephen Cleobury

King's Bench

Tributes to Sir Stephen Cleobury, CBE (1948 – 2019)

Revd Dr Stephen Cherry

Dean of King's College, Cambridge

Stephen was a force of nature; his energy and stamina were remarkable. He worked extremely hard and put in very long hours, but he was also the master of managing small amounts of time and wringing the maximum value from every minute of every hour. That's certainly how he ran a choir practice, and also how he expected other parts of life to be managed too. Last summer, he realised that the choristers were not rehearsing their instruments very efficiently, so embarked on a campaign of spending time with each one, pointing out how ineffective it was to play the easy bits over and over – something every child loves. No, good practice involves identifying weaknesses and eliminating them, then moving on.

Stephen was a man of strongly held and thoroughly thought-through opinions.

A traditionalist with a strong sense of the irreplaceable quality of the prose of the Prayer Book and the Authorised Version, he didn't feel that liturgical experimentation or innovations were especially useful ventures. New musical composition, on the other hand, was an area where he was remarkably open to risk and innovation. He was slow to warm to the joys of email, but to the end was sending them out by the score.

Perhaps Stephen's most defining qualities were his attention to detail and his extraordinary capacity to focus. No misplaced comma would escape his attention, and questions of tuning and tempi were addressed with clinical precision. Never under-prepared, he expected from others no more than he demanded of himself, but he maybe never quite appreciated that his own energy, tenacity and commitment were of a quality that few other mortals could ever manage.

Simon Lindley

Former president, Royal College of Organists

Through leadership at a crucial stage, Stephen Cleobury exercised a major influence on the Royal College of Organists during its final years at Kensington Gore and the transition to St Andrew's, Holborn. As honorary secretary [1981-90] he brought distinction, discretion, academic probity and rare pastoral gifts. A valued examiner, he proved invariably fair and adept at wedding numerical totals for each candidate to the verbal commentary, possessing a seemingly unshakeable knack of gauging whether a particularly border-line candidate deserved to pass, quickly winning the admiration of professional colleagues, not least those of earlier generations. He was a strong, wise and personable president [1990-92] who put the College's welfare first, established a regular Newsletter, and chose



▲ Cleobury conducting the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, for whom he began the tradition of commissioning a new Christmas carol every year

◀ the University of Huddersfield as a major examining centre.

Maturity of judgement belied Stephen's youthful approach and he maintained a genuine and lasting interest in College members, not least those who proved serious students of the art of the organ. His father, John, himself an organist of considerable attainment and a respected medical practitioner, sponsored College recitals on a regular basis.

Punctual, prepared and professional, Stephen attracted respect from those who worked with him

Advice was frequently sought from Stephen, and was given unstintingly and freely. A warm, slightly wistful smile and a sometimes polite, almost demure, silence ensued when asked his opinion of an individual whom he may have regarded as less than wholly worthy, but no words of his damned anyone with faint praise. He did a huge amount for the College, not least conducting at St Andrew's a memorably enjoyable 'Come and sing *Messiah*' with unflinching courtesy, distinction, flair and vision.

A meteoric career took Stephen from King's School, Worcester to Cambridge and St John's, thence to St Matthew's Northampton, Northampton Grammar School, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral as the first Anglican master of the music and, from 1982 until 2019, as director of music at King's College, Cambridge. The RCO must count itself hugely lucky to have benefited from his wisdom and energy along the way.

Edward Price

Former chorister, King's College, Cambridge, and baritone, BBC Singers

I was lucky enough to be directed by Sir Stephen Cleobury in both the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and the BBC Singers. While these choirs are very different in their output and make up, Stephen's expertise straddled both effortlessly and achieved the same goal – enabling the singers to give their best with minimum stress, in order to do full justice to the music being sung.

I would always look forward to programmes conducted by Stephen at the BBC Singers, because I knew that, whatever we were singing and however demanding it was, the process of learning the score would put me in a place of complete confidence come performance time. His preparation was immaculate and detailed, showing a respect for us singers, which you could not help but return.

At King's, his time and the effort he put in were even more important, given the short amount of rehearsal time available. I will always remember the pages of notes he produced for the recording of the Rachmaninov Vespers, with individual staggered breathing for every choral scholar to mark in his score. At the time it might have seemed fussy (I was young!), but the result was a seamless legato, which made the recording work in a way which many did not think possible from a choir of boys and young men. The more I worked with him, the more I appreciated that he knew exactly what was required to make a piece of music work with the forces at his disposal. This is how he succeeded in performing with such success the full range of repertoire, from the Eton Choir Book to countless world premieres.

Aside from his musical skills, Stephen was a man of huge generosity and kindness. Whether nurturing and training boys and students, or supporting experienced professionals, one always felt he was on one's side. This is why so many, myself included, credit him with playing a critical part in their musical life, and why he will be so greatly missed.

James Whitbourn

Composer and producer

I worked with Stephen Cleobury for more than 30 years, including 29 years of BBC Christmas broadcasts. We also did the first choral concert from King's live into cinemas and numerous other recordings and broadcasts for television, cinema, disc and radio, Choral Evensong among them. Stephen also premiered several of my compositions, including a new setting of the evening canticles composed for an Easter Day broadcast, with Robert Tear as tenor soloist and a tam-tam part that surged into the magnificent acoustics of King's chapel.

Stephen was a great innovator. He loved to learn about new media platforms and to think about how they might be used for King's College Choir; he was always open to new ideas. He was excited to work on the first King's DVDs, for example, and to experience 5.1 Surround Sound when it was brand new to commercial product. New works and collaborations also excited him, and he was thrilled to be introduced to new music, soloists, orchestras or ensembles that might enhance and enrich his daily work with the choir. He famously began the tradition of commissioning a Christmas carol each year.

The heart of his work, however, was not on the big screen or on the big stage: it happened behind closed doors, when he worked kindly and encouragingly with the boy choristers whom he educated and gently fashioned into accomplished professionals. Above all, he led by example: always punctual, prepared and professional, he invariably attracted respect from those who worked with him. In return, he respected the time and talents of others, and trusted them to do their work. Stephen has been there for me since the very start of my professional life, the constant whom I shall miss but shall always remember with the greatest affection.

Jonathan Manners

Producer, BBC Singers

I first met Stephen in 1998 while at King's College School, working with the choristers in King's College Choir. What became evident to me then was as apparent working with him during a period as his agent a decade later, and more recently as producer at the BBC Singers: preparation and attention to detail were everything. Whether it was Evensong on a wet February afternoon, a BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall or the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, no performance or liturgical service was any more important than the other.

Stephen had the ability to manage and engage musicians of all abilities – children, students, amateurs or professionals – with the same expectation of the highest possible standards. That is why he was so respected in all the musical circles in which he worked. Each rehearsal and recording session was meticulously planned well in advance, with nothing left to chance.

During my year at King's College School, I witnessed his ability to command respect rather than demand it. After the filming of *Carols from King's* for the BBC, Stephen ate supper with the choristers in the choir

school. Talk among the choristers turned towards an upcoming football match which I was to referee – an unpopular decision for a particular chorister, who on multiple occasions had been the victim of my lack of knowledge of the rules of association football, and was vocal in his disapproval. Stephen clearly was not impressed by the tone of the chorister to a master, albeit a junior one: 'That's all very well, but I bet Mr Manners knows how many quavers there are in a dotted minim.'

One of the things I respected most about Stephen was his diligence to the responsibility of his roles, both at King's and the BBC. Before Stephen's final Christmas at King's, I asked if I might record an interview with him in the chapel about the 100th Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. It was to be broadcast during the interval of a BBC Singers Concert, and despite frailty due to cruel illness, Stephen agreed. When others would have drawn a line and politely declined, the dedication to duty which personified his character was more apparent than ever. Just days before the carol service we recorded the interview in the choir stalls at King's. As we finished, Stephen asked if I had what I needed, before adding, 'Now, if you'll excuse me, I've promised to record some pieces on the organ tomorrow and need to do some practice.'

Our final BBC Singers project with Stephen was in July in King's chapel, for a programme marking the 100th anniversary of the birth of Sir David Willcocks. Stephen's same forensic approach to preparation was evident, despite the familiarity of all the music and his declining health. Stephen was keen we should record *Sing!*, Willcocks's choral arrangement of Widor's Toccata. I was reluctant, based on the seasonal nature of the radio programme, but we ended up finishing the session with the piece, and for posterity filmed it from the organ loft at King's. It was a fitting end to Stephen's work with the BBC Singers, with Stephen's appreciation visibly evident as the choir and organ faded up into the magnificent fanned-vaulting of King's chapel, the words almost valedictory at the end of a career which enriched a tradition and the musical lives of people whom he worked with and audiences around the world: 'All our voices raise and sing to God a joyous hymn of praise. Sing praise. Hallelujah.' ■



KEN LEIGHTON

Choral catharsis

Eric Whitacre hand-picks his singers and composes for them with care, being unafraid of tackling painful subject matter. **Clare Stevens** sits in on rehearsals of *The Sacred Veil* and meets the conductor-composer

There was a moment during their rehearsal for the European premiere of Eric Whitacre's *The Sacred Veil* when the members of his UK-based choir, the Eric Whitacre Singers, realised that this was not just another professional session. The composer was conducting, and they had spent the first part of the rehearsal just singing through the score, familiarising themselves with the music. Then Whitacre invited poet and historian Charles Anthony Silvestri, who provided the texts for most of Whitacre's well-known short choral works, to talk to the singers about the context of this much more substantial piece.

It was inspired by the sad story of the illness and death from ovarian cancer 15 years ago of Silvestri's wife Julia. Whitacre

and Silvestri are not only artistic collaborators but have been best friends since college, so Whitacre knew Julia Silvestri well. After her death, her husband left a poem dedicated to her memory on Whitacre's piano, in the unspoken hope that he might set it to music; on finding the text, and conceptualising how it might be used, Whitacre almost immediately envisaged it as one movement of a longer work.

Together they developed a libretto that includes four poems by Charles Anthony Silvestri, two by Whitacre and one by Julia Lawrence Silvestri. It also quotes from the blog in which she charted the progress of her illness, and an email written to friends and her large group of social media followers at a crisis point towards the end.

The blog post explains how her hair began to fall out as a result of chemotherapy treatment at exactly one o'clock on her birthday. Julia goes on to describe her children's reactions to her shaved head and new wig: far from being upset, they were amused and excited about her new look.

It was at this point in Charles Anthony Silvestri's story that the atmosphere in the rehearsal studio changed.

'Which birthday was it when Julia's hair began to fall out?' asked one singer.

'Her 35th. By her 36th birthday Julia wasn't really able to speak very much,' was his response.

'And how old were your children?'

'Seven and three.'

▼ The Eric Whitacre Singers at iTunes Festival: performing with Hans Zimmer, broadcast live to 119 countries



The impact in the room was obvious; most of the 24 singers were roughly the same age as Julia Silvestri was when she died, and at a similar stage in life; indeed, several of the women were pregnant. Male or female, the choir members could not help identifying with the Silvestris' situation.

The 'sacred veil' of the cantata's title is the veil between the worlds of birth, life and death, which, in the words of one of Charles Anthony Silvestri's poems,

Grows thin and opens slightly up
Just long enough for Love to slip,
Silent, either in or out
Of this our fragile, fleeting world,
Whence or whither a new home awaits.

The text of the 12-movement cantata describes a couple falling in love; waiting in thrilled anticipation for the birth of their first child; receiving the news that cancerous cells have been found in the woman's ovary; dealing with treatment and its side-effects; and facing the devastating final diagnosis that the cancer has metastasised and nothing more can be done. At this stage Julia, a committed Christian, emailed her friends pleading with them to pray for her, and the text of her email forms the tenth movement. It is followed by her husband's agonised description of her last hours:

Listening to your labored breath,
Your struggle ends as mine begins.
You rise; I fall.

The composer provides the text for the final movement, 'Child of wonder,' a poignant song of farewell and acceptance, which concludes:

Stretched on ocean waves
Of endless foam
Welcome home my child
Welcome home.

The Silvestris are never mentioned by name in the sung text, so the work has a universal quality. It could be described as a secular requiem, vividly depicting the reality of terminal illness and death in the modern world; the bewildering incantation of unfamiliar and incomprehensible medical terms in the sixth movement, 'I'm afraid we



© MARC ROJCE



▲ Eric Whitacre (l) and Charles Anthony Silvestri (r): artistic collaborators and friends

found something ...' is particularly effective. And Whitacre's compositional style, with its long lines and intense harmonies, full of suspensions and dissonances, lends itself perfectly to representing the last days and hours of life.

No wonder the choir found it difficult to sing. There were visible tears on stage at St John's, Smith Square, London, at the end of the European premiere performance on 25 October, and the impact on the audience – most of them taken unawares by the subject

co-commission from the Monash Academy of Performing Arts – MLIVE and NTR ZaterdagMatinee for the Netherlands Radio Choir, who will perform the work in Amsterdam on 28 March. The Australian premiere takes place in Melbourne on 8 April, and a recording is on its way. For the two performances on consecutive nights in St John's, Smith Square, the Eric Whitacre Singers were joined by pianist Christopher Glynn and cellist Jeffrey Zeigler, a former member of the Kronos Quartet.

'I love the way British professional singers approach the challenge presented by my impossibly long phrases' – Eric Whitacre

matter – was even more noticeable. As other commentators have written, there is a dearth of secular works that allow people to engage reflectively and emotionally with the existential issues of life, death and grief; the cathartic effect of this one gives it enormous potential to fill a gap in the choral repertoire.

The Sacred Veil is scored for SATB choir, piano and cello – the fifth movement, 'Whenever there is Birth', is an intense threnody for the solo cello, which also augments the accompaniment at various points. The work received its world premiere a year ago in Los Angeles, where it was performed in Walt Disney Hall by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, with whom Whitacre is artist-in-residence – a

Many of the names on the personnel list of the Eric Whitacre Singers are familiar from other professional chamber choirs and as soloists with choral societies around the UK. This carefully selected group is the antithesis of Whitacre's online community of Virtual Choirs of thousands, of all ages and musical standards, performing his music together in live streams from around the world. It is managed on Whitacre's behalf by Music Productions Ltd, and although based in the UK, the choir performs with him on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Eric Whitacre Singers perform a wide range of both classical and popular repertoire. Their BBC Proms debut in 2012 included a collaboration with singer- ➤



▲ Eric Whitacre and Charles Anthony Silvestri with the Los Angeles Master Chorale at the world premiere of *The Sacred Veil* in Los Angeles

◀ songwriter Imogen Heap; they sang at the Templeton Prize Laureate Ceremony for Archbishop Desmond Tutu alongside singer-songwriter Annie Lennox and the London African Gospel Choir; work regularly with British soul superstar Laura Mvula; and featured at iTunes Festival, broadcast live to 119 countries, performing with German composer-record producer Hans Zimmer. In 2018 they appeared at an experiential installation for fashion designer Anya Hindmarch CBE.

Recording is an important part of their remit; their debut album *Light & Gold* won a GRAMMY award for Best Choral Performance; their second, *Water Night* went straight to no.1 in the classical iTunes and Billboard charts; and they have also featured on the soundtracks of Hollywood movies.

The singers are chosen according to the composer's very specific criteria. It goes without saying that these include the sight-reading ability for which British choirs are famous; Whitacre says he never ceases to be amazed by this. The small team of 24

assembled for *The Sacred Veil* read through the cantata with complete fluency – 'as though they were reading a magazine,' he says – and as they worked through it in more detail in their second rehearsal session, it was only the 'You rise, I fall' movement, which calls for some complex effects at the extremes of the singers' ranges, that posed any technical challenges. ('I know this is bonkers,' Whitacre admits at one point, 'but will you do it anyway?') They do.)

Personality, he tells me, is as important as the voice itself when he's recruiting for his choir. 'I'm looking for people who will contribute to the *esprit de corps* of the group, and are prepared to surrender their individual egos to be part of it. Many of our singers are soloists, with characterful, distinctive voices, but when they sing for me the most important thing is to blend, so that we get a completely homogeneous sound.'

This means they must be able to produce the straight tone that Whitacre is looking for in order to make the close harmony in his pieces work; but there's more to it than that.

'I need there to be a *shimmer* to the sound that goes through all the voice parts.'

Whitacre first met many of the choir members when he spent some time working with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, or during his five-year period as composer-in-residence at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Others are recommended to him or to Music Productions through the choral music grapevine: 'Everyone knows the kind of sound I like!

'Basically, I wish singers could be born with gills, like fish, instead of lungs, so that they never had to breathe! But I love the way British professional singers approach the challenge presented by my impossibly long phrases. When I compose, I see these 24 people's faces in my mind's eye – I can't think of a better testament to their artistic quality.' ■ ericwhitacre.com

Clare Stevens works as a writer, editor and publicist in the Welsh Marches, where she sings with Hereford Choral Society.

Performance review

In the second of our series on organ repertoire, **Gerben Mourik** introduces a forgotten solo concerto from wartime Germany

part 2 Hans-Friedrich Micheelsen: Organ Concerto 'Es sungen drei Engel'



Hans-Friedrich Micheelsen (b.1902) grew up in what, historically, had been a Holstein farming family on his father's side; his mother was the daughter of a salesman. At home there was much singing, largely of the chorales and folksongs which would remain sources of inspiration for Micheelsen throughout his life. Indeed, he considered such themes to be the primary source of his music. Following his training as a teacher (at the behest of his father, who worked as both a teacher and cantor), he spent a number of years, from 1922 onwards, as a private tutor. In the same year he was appointed to the position of organist of the Pauluskirche in Brunsbüttelkoog.

During the same period, Micheelsen followed both piano and organ lessons, later going on to study organ with Max Brode in Hamburg; from 1925, he took three years of lessons in harmony and counterpoint with Paul Kickstat. Appointed organist of Berlin's Matthäuskirche in 1932, the following year he became a student at the Musikhochschule, where his teachers included Paul Hindemith. These lessons were to prove pivotal in his development as a composer.

Following the completion of his studies, Micheelsen was invited to direct the newly formed school of church music in Hamburg. Military service intervened, lasting four-and-a-half years from 1941; Micheelsen later described the experience as a 'tough school of patience'. After the war, attention turned first to the rebuilding of the church music school, ▶

◀ Panel from the Isenheim altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald which inspired Hindemith's 'Engelkonzert', the first movement of his Symphony 'Mathis der Maler'. Micheelsen, a former student of Hindemith, adopted 'Es sungen drei Engel' on which Hindemith's 'Engelkonzert' is based, as the thematic material for his second *Orgelkonzert*



▲ Hans-Friedrich Micheelsen and (below) the Matthäuskirche in Berlin, where Micheelsen was organist from 1932

◀ in turn leading to his 1954 appointment as director of the Staatliche Musikhochschule in Hamburg. Following his retirement in 1962 and the death of his second wife (a professional alto) in 1971, Micheelsen returned, finally, to his beloved Holstein. He remained active as an organist there until his death in 1973, having recorded an EP two years earlier of excerpts from his first collections of organ compositions: *Choralmusik* and *Das holsteinische Orgelbüchlein*.

Compositions

Micheelsen composed throughout his life. The first organ works, such as the *Holsteinische Orgelbüchlein* (1936) and the first collections of *Choralmusik* (composed 1933-36) proved very popular. This was partly due to the well-known melodies and texts on which the pieces were based and partly due to Micheelsen's knack of keeping his music accessible for the average village congregation. His 1952 *Organistenpraxis* can be seen as a supplement to the *Choralmusik*: three collections of simple chorale preludes, gradually increasing in difficulty. The seven concertos for solo organ (composed between 1938 and 1963) are based on well-

which Micheelsen used to present and develop themes in an accessible manner. The fact that his music was performed by amateur musicians more than that of any of the other previously mentioned 'greats' of the time was probably not Micheelsen's intention, however. Just like Ernst Pepping, Micheelsen's music grew from such old-fashioned elements as the church modes, and polyphony developed from the thematic material. And, like Pepping, Micheelsen would suffer the bitter experience of seeing his style overtaken by atonality in the early 1960s, a tendency that would likewise influence church music renewers such as Bornefeld and Reda.

Micheelsen always writes for the player, the music is never more difficult or complex than necessary

known hymns. They were followed by the collection *Meditationen für Orgel* (1971), which would be his last work. In addition to his organ compositions, Micheelsen composed new melodies for church hymns, many small-scale works for amateur choirs, and a number of large-scale choral works including three Passions, a Requiem, Mass settings and motets. His first important choral work, the *Deutsche Messe* was composed in 1933.

Style

Micheelsen remained outside the progressive group of German Protestant church musicians of his era, such as Hugo Distler, Ernst Pepping, Helmut Bornefeld and Siegfried Reda. His music received attention only during the first edition of the influential Heidenheimer Arbeitstage für Neue Kirchenmusik conference¹, perhaps because of the modal harmonies

Intended organ type

Micheelsen's music barely betrays its composer's preferred organ type. The LP recording of the Organ Concerto 'Es sungen drei Engel' made by the Dutch organist Feike Asma in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam was warmly received by Micheelsen, but perhaps this was due primarily to the playing rather than the organ. The organ on which Micheelsen made his only (as far as I am aware) solo recording as an organist has historic roots, although these are barely evident in the sound. The only performance instructions in the scores pertain to manual indications and, sometimes, pitch designations. In this sense, Micheelsen departed significantly from his contemporaries David, Reda and Bornefeld. Put simply, the singing quality which so characterises Micheelsen's music renders it effective on many different organ types.

▼ Ex. 1: 'Es sungen drei Engel' opens with a Toccata based on a motif of fourths and fifths, and a turbulent sequence of seconds and fourths

Hans Friedrich Micheelsen, 1943

© BÄRENREITER-VERLAG KASSEL



▲ Ex.2: The fake entry of the fugue at one after 'Im Zeitmass' gives way to a playful divertimento

'Es sungen drei Engel' and Paul Hindemith

'Es sungen drei Engel' is a Passiontide hymn in which the suffering of Jesus from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion is described in 11 verses. Paul Hindemith arranged this hymn in his 1934 'Engelkonzert', the first movement of his Symphony 'Mathis der Maler'. The first performance of this work was conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler (at whose suggestion the work was composed) who was subsequently severely criticised by the Nazis, Hindemith's wife having Jewish roots and his music condemned as degenerate. Was Micheelsen's basing of an organ concerto in 1943 on the same theme perhaps a reference to his former teacher?

Micheelsen himself provided the following description: 'In the first movement the melody on which the piece is based emerges from a wickerwork of concertante lines, reaching a polyphonic, hymnic climax. In the second movement, the theme is melodically varied while in the final section, the theme is treated fugally, via many diminutions, to its final climax.'

In the opening Toccata, two motifs are juxtaposed. The first is a renaissance-inspired motif consisting of fourths and fifths, on which the second motif, a turbulent sequence of seconds and fourths played in octaves, provides commentary [Ex.1]. Notable at the opening of the piece is how systematically the tension is increased as sound-colours are superimposed on the basic tonality of C

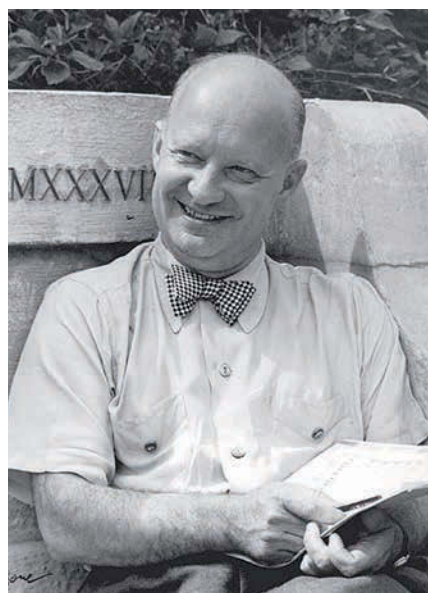
major. The sequences in the repetitions of the second motif meanwhile transport the music to even more foreign keys. In the second section of the Toccata, Micheelsen combines this figure with the main theme in a trio texture, the pizzicato bass line somewhat reminiscent of jazz music from the 1930s. The recapitulation concludes with hymnic writing, the final bars reminiscent of tolling bells.

The second movement, a Kanzona in trio form, consists of three variations during which the cantus firmus wanders between the voices, concluding in the bass. Once again, the music is gradually coloured

by the addition of 'foreign' notes. In bars 12-13, this leads to a very beautiful moment in which C#, A flat, F, B flat, D flat, F#, and D# are heard in sequence, allowing Micheelsen to continue in the basic tonality of E minor. The challenge for the player lies in maintaining the singing character as the tempo gradually increases, concluding 'Sehr fließend'.

The initial exposition of the concluding fugue is followed by a fake entrance of the subject [Ex.2], introducing a playful (and technically challenging) divertimento. Following its conclusion, however, the fugue's denouement contains no hint of the ▶

▼ Micheelsen's teacher Paul Hindemith (l), whose Symphony 'Mathis der Maler' earned the opprobrium of the Nazi regime for both the composer and the conductor of its premiere, Wilhelm Furtwängler (r)



FOUNDATION HINDEMITH, BLONAV (CH)



BAIN NEWS SERVICE, PUBLISHER



▲ Ex.3: Micheelsen's score indicates a variety of specific accents, for example in this excerpt from the first movement

◁ 'inflated Brahms-Reger style' as Micheelsen referred to it. Instead, the stretto follows, surprisingly and creatively introduced and referencing the toccata figures from the first movement. A highly virtuosic coda concludes with the theme, played 'Hymnisch und breit', the final repeated figures drawing on the end of the Toccata. The last page withdraws all accidentals, giving the listener a sense of harmonic homecoming. In 1964, Micheelsen composed a motet on the same melody; a chorale which therefore tied together the beginning and end of his compositional career.

Micheelsen on Micheelsen

'It has always been my intention to build further on established principles, to animate the old ways through new principles of composition, but in no sense to replace them with completely different (or rather, unlistenable to) experiments. This way of working does not in any way imply an aping of the historical style ... that which looks interesting on paper but which annoys the listener does not impress me. This is the spirit in which I have composed my organ works.'

'As a "langsam-wachsender", I have worked long at each composition. Some works have been revised from year to year, until I was finally convinced by a particular version.'

Micheelsen's solo recording: questions of interpretation

Although Micheelsen dedicated most of his performing activities after 1938 to choirs, in 1971 he made a commercial recording of four movements from his early organ works. The recording was made on the organ at Hennstedt (15 stops), a good vehicle for the composer to demonstrate how he

intended his works to be played. In this context there are a number of noteworthy aspects. His registrations favour tierce stops over soft reeds, both in solo and in fugal passages. The recording is particularly interesting in determining the composer's intentions regarding tempo and articulation. Micheelsen never specifies metronome marks in his scores, but his indications do include a variety of specific accents [Ex.3]. On the EP, tempi are extremely moderate but also somewhat free, even where descriptive indications are provided. For example, the central section of his Passacaglia is played considerably quicker, despite the increased movement inherent in the note values. The articulation marks, on the other hand, are adopted scrupulously. Other mannerisms also appear: in the chorale prelude 'Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade', for example, the slow bass line is played non-legato. The only moments that are played legato are those marked 'sehr gebunden'; elsewhere, the contrapuntal lines determine both articulation and phrasing.

Personal notes

What is it that makes the music of Micheelsen so convincing? I believe, in the first instance, it is Micheelsen's directness of approach; themes are immediately presented at the opening of a piece and, where the composer introduces freer elements, the roots of the thematic material remain obvious. The significant playability of the music is also important: Micheelsen always writes for the player, the music is never more difficult or complex than necessary. On the other hand, the close relationship between the text and the music allows his works to speak directly to the listener. Chordal writing consistently follows a logical construction, whereby Micheelsen puts the melody in prime position. ■

A live recording of Micheelsen's 'Es sungen drei Engel', performed by Gerben Mourik, can be found at bit.ly/38VGuh1.

Extracts © Bärenreiter-Verlag Kassel taken from Micheelsen, *Orgelkonzert no.2 'Es sungen drei Engel'*. Reproduced with kind permission.

This article was translated into English by Chris Bragg.

References

1. The Heidenheimer Arbeitstage für Neue Kirchenmusik was a conference about new church music held between 1946 and 1960. Founded by Helmut Bornefeld, it was based at the Pauluskirche in Heidenheim where Bornefeld was organist and cantor. The phased rebuilding from 1937-54 of the church's 1890s Link organ introduced a neo-classical aesthetic to the instrument and acted as an impetus for the event.

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A former winner of the improvisation competitions at St Albans and Haarlem, Gerben Mourik is city organist of Oudewater and artistic director of 'De Stad Klundert' in the Netherlands.

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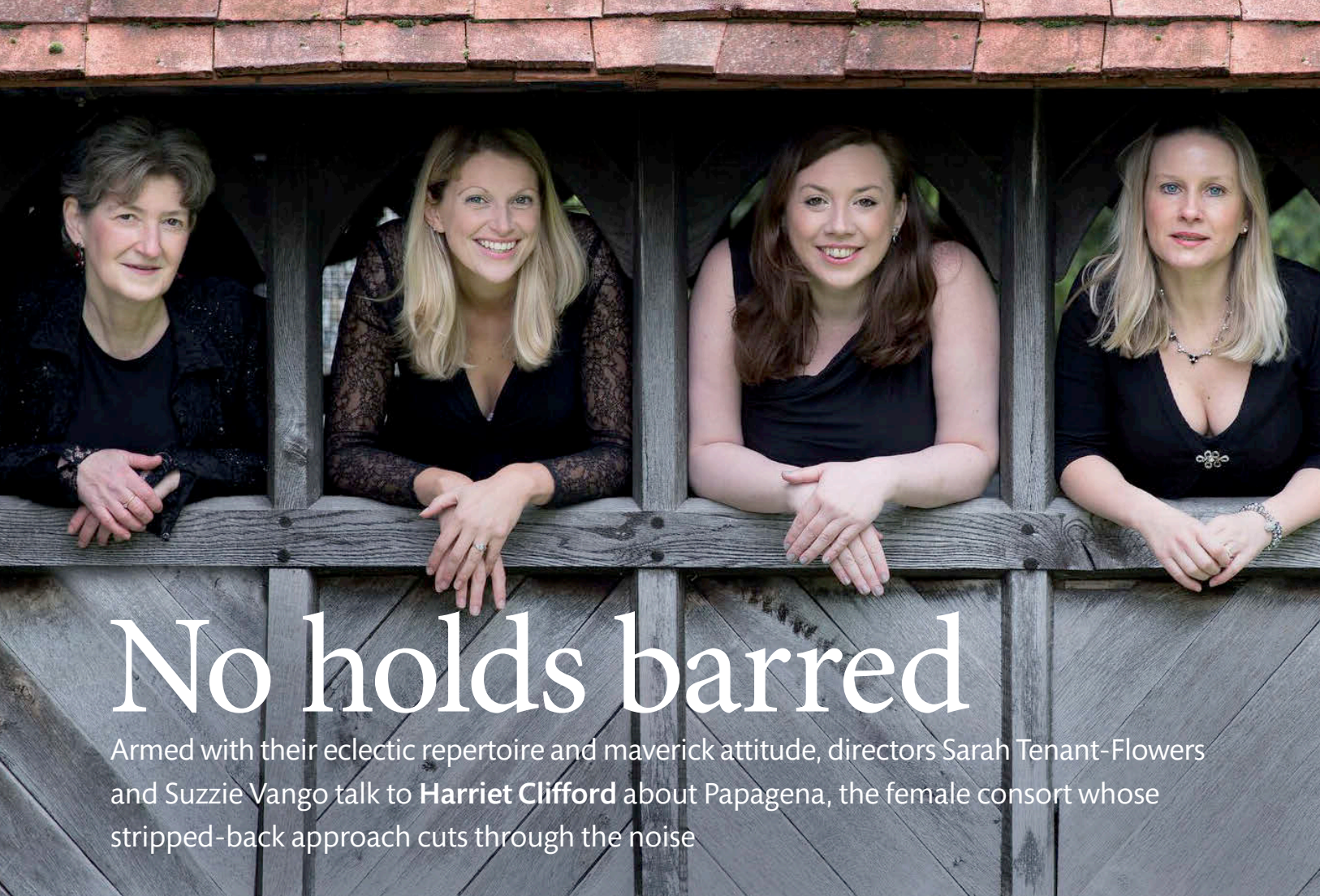


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No holds barred

Armed with their eclectic repertoire and maverick attitude, directors Sarah Tenant-Flowers and Suzzie Vango talk to **Harriet Clifford** about Papagena, the female consort whose stripped-back approach cuts through the noise

At the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2018, a leather-clad biker and a modestly robed nun settled down in their seats, one expecting a Guns N' Roses tribute act, the other prepared for a moment of spiritual reflection. Instead, they were confronted with five female classically trained a cappella singers touring their 2017 album: *Nuns and Roses*. Thankfully, Papagena's directors Sarah Tenant-Flowers and Suzzie Vango explain over coffee at the Royal Festival Hall, the biker was 'entranced' and the nun was complimentary, if a little surprised. Both went away having taken in repertoire spanning from Hildegard of Bingen to Katy Perry, a range which typifies Papagena's output in their concerts and albums alike.

Their most recent venture, *Hush!*, which is released on SOMM this month, incorporates 11 different languages and features some of the group's more contemporary comedic pieces, alongside 'beautiful, poignant, emotive pieces', such as Holst's *The swallow leaves her nest*, which has not been recorded for decades. 'I think that's important for us when we do well-known composers – which we don't do in the main – there's still got to be something new and refreshing. We want to build the repertoire, not keep repeating it', says Tenant-Flowers.

Papagena officially launched in 2015, with the shared *raison d'être* of creating a female consort to fill the gaps between the all-male groups, such as the Hilliard Ensemble and The King's Singers, who seemed to be dominating the a cappella world. 'We set ourselves up,' Tenant-Flowers explains, 'and then discovered that there actually wasn't much repertoire.' Faced with the reality that a lot of upper-voice choral music is composed with children in mind, the group has prioritised sourcing and commissioning works that are suitable for adult women to sing. Since being taken on by SOMM and working with Adrian Peacock on their second album, *The Darkest Midnight*, the group's profile has continued to grow, with coverage on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune* and Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*.

Yet, Vango admits, they've come up against resistance, with many people believing that they don't want to sit through a whole programme of upper-voice work. She explains, 'It's like we're trying to convert people. It's a bit like anything to do with women and music at the moment: you have to convince people that the soundworld you create is as interesting as that of the male groups.' Despite this, feedback from audience members has been positive, with the diversity within each performance surprising concertgoers. 'We



BEN MCKEE

◀ Without boundaries: the a cappella consort Papagena comprises (l-r) Sarah Tenant-Flowers, Lizzie Drury, Suzzie Vango, Abbi Temple, and Suzi Purkis

us to sing it; it doesn't sound forced or like we're pretending. We don't want to be mime artists, pretending to be something we're not.'

Championing authenticity is at the heart of what the group does, choosing to sing without microphones, sound effects or any other 'gimmicks': 'We don't want to distort the human voice in any way. We want to explore the human voice, but we think that's interesting enough – you don't have to throw fancy effects at it,' explains Tenant-Flowers. They hope that the experience of listening to a Papagena album is the same as seeing them live; besides, Vango adds, it's nice to be able to say 'no' to the question, 'Do you need any amplification?' They believe that their decision to sing without microphones enhances the intimacy of the performance, which is a crucial factor for the group: 'We really care about the audience. We want to give them something special, rather than sing *at* them – their reaction is very important to us.'

Unlike at a traditional choral concert, the audience's reaction is a significant part of Papagena's performance, as some of their pieces are comedic, including Jim Clement's setting of Caitlin Moran's comedy poem *A Woman's IF*. Putting a unique spin on Rudyard Kipling's 'If' poem, the piece leaves the audience 'absolutely wailing with laughter', so much so that the group has had to adapt the length of the rest bars to allow the noise to simmer down. Whether or not it makes it onto *Hush!* depends on how it sounds without the laughter, they explain, emphasising their commitment to creating an authentic experience for the listener. 'A lot of choral humour is a bit naff and a tiny bit twee,' Tenant-Flowers adds; 'we like pieces that make the audience truly laugh, that are surprising.' 'Quirky,' offers Vango, neatly summarising Papagena's performance style, repertoire choice and sense of humour.

This is not exclusive, however. The group recently launched a successful Crowdfunder campaign, commissioning composer John Duggan to write a setting for female voices of the relatively unknown

haven't really set ourselves any boundaries. We don't exclude any kind of music that we are interested in exploring,' says Tenant-Flowers, although the singers acknowledge that their training places a 'kind of classical spin' on everything they do, so it still exists within the Papagena soundworld.

With only one change since launching, Papagena's line-up includes sopranos Vango, Abbi Temple and Lizzie Drury, and altos Tenant-Flowers and Suzie Purkis. Keeping the line-up stable has been

'We don't want to be mime artists, pretending to be something we're not' – Sarah Tenant-Flowers

a deliberate decision, says Tenant-Flowers: 'We've become very instinctive in how we work together and how we reach decisions together. It's quite difficult just to throw in a new person or to keep changing that, so we'd rather really explore the potential that the five of us have.' Knowing each voice thoroughly is crucial to the group's directors, as both also compose, with Vango's arrangement of *Sweet Child of Mine* encapsulating their style in its classic authenticity: 'She's written it in a particular way that really suits

Stabat Mater Speciosa. Having placed it at the heart of a future album based on polar opposites, the group hopes to record the work alongside a 16th-century setting, freshly edited for Papagena by academic Laurie Stras, of the more widely recognised *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, juxtaposing the image of Mary at the cradle with that of Mary at the cross. The singers approached Duggan because of his 'flair for writing beautiful lines and really lucid textures', as well as his understanding of the importance of the text, which is something that attracts ▶



▲▲ Not 'a feminist group': Papagena's authentic, varied approach has inspired the formation of other all-female consorts

▲ Recording *Hush!* at Challow Park Studios was a 'very enjoyable experience' thanks to careful planning

◀ Papagena to composers, regardless of whether they are male or female. The piece was written in collaboration with the group, Duggan attending rehearsals with some ideas which were then workshopped and explored.

As part of the process of conceptualising and recording their new album, *Hush!*, the group listed the top five pieces in their repertoire and noticed that an overriding concept of quiet could join them together. Whether this be in the form of an instruction or a sense of peace, the word 'Hush!' seemed to encapsulate the sentiment, with the exclamation mark adding 'a bit more attitude' and ensuring that people do not think the album – recorded during September 2019 at Challow Park Studios, Wantage – solely features lullabies. Planning the recording programme so that the more challenging repertoire came at certain times of the day 'made it a very enjoyable experience'. 'We were all as high as kites by the end of the weekend,' laughs Vango.

The challenge of singing in 11 different languages on the album was something the group took in their stride: 'Singers aren't frightened of singing in any language,

because for us it's just beautiful colours and sounds.' They took advantage of language coaches, whether in the form of a specialist, a friend, or the CEO of their record label SOMM, who helped them with the piece in Greek. Speaking about the group's relationship with their label, Tenant-Flowers says, 'We are totally thrilled that they've got the confidence. I don't know if they'll have heard a single piece on this disc, but they've still taken it on. There's a trust there now.'

What is Papagena's greatest achievement? 'Just surviving,' says Tenant-Flowers. 'We have done this entirely without any external funding. We've just gone out there and tried to sing to the best of our ability, the most fascinating programmes we can – I'm very proud of that.' As well as this, she explains that other female consorts have been set up after hearing Papagena: 'If we can just get more repertoire being created and more female groups thinking they can do this, then great, job done.' Having sung live on Radio 3 for the 2018 International Women's Day, their new album is deliberately being released in time for the 2020 event on 8 March.

With this pioneering attitude, one might be forgiven for thinking that these women would call themselves feminists. Instead, Tenant-Flowers says, 'I don't think we see ourselves as "a feminist group" in any way. We're just five women who want to explore the human voice.' In their performances, they take this one step further, moving beyond 'five people standing in a row', having collaborated with a movement director for their tour at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Before the conversation is drowned out by the amplified sound of musicians tuning up for a performance in the RFH café, Tenant-Flowers adds, 'That's our gimmick – we move.' ■

Papagena's third album Hush! is released on SOMM in February 2020. papagena.co.uk

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CD HUSH!

Papagena

SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0609

(see feature, p.26)



WIN

In their second release, the five singers of Papagena present a cappella works spanning from the 9th century to the 21st, incorporating sacred, secular, classical, ancient, modern and traditional. Juxtaposing comedic pieces with poignant and emotive works, the singers explore the manifold meanings behind the word 'hush', ranging from stopping and listening, to a calming sense of peace. The ensemble takes on 11 different languages on the disc, including Yiddish, Romanian and Russian, and performs many tracks

of rarely heard or recorded repertoire, compositions and arrangements.

Courtesy of SOMM Recordings, we have 3 copies to give away; quote code 'HUSH'.

CD BACH IST DER VATER, WIR SIND DIE BUBEN

Peter Holder, Holzhey organ (1797), Neresheim Abbey

Fugue State Records FSRCD 015

★★★★★

'A most interesting programme, wonderfully played' (see review, p.77)



WIN

Drawing on repertoire from three members of the Bach family (J.S., C.P.E. and W.F.), Peter Holder's recording showcases the 'astonishing acoustics' of Neresheim Abbey and its late-baroque, quasi-romantic Holzhey organ. The first recording from Westminster Abbey's sub-organist, this disc also features works by Ernst, Rinck and Mozart.

Courtesy of Fugue State Records, we have 5 copies to give away; quote code 'BACH'.

CD KENNETH LEIGHTON: SACRED CHORAL WORKS

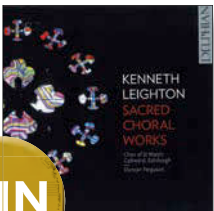
Samuel Jenkins (t), Choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, Joseph Beech (org) /

Duncan Ferguson (dir)

Delphian DCD 34218

★★★★★

'A well-programmed and beautifully executed CD' (see review, p.85)



WIN

Kenneth Leighton spent much time in Edinburgh, so this disc – released to mark the 90th anniversary of his birth – seems a fitting tribute. Spanning the composer's career, it features his earliest and latest works for a cappella choir, three Christmas carols and works composed for the Choir of St Mary's Cathedral.

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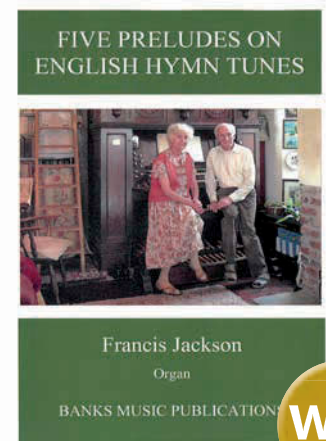
Francis Jackson

Banks Music Publications 13969, new revised and typeset edition, £7.50

'Classics of the English hymn-tune prelude genre' (see review, p.103)

Francis Jackson draws on the forms of toccata, fantasia, trio and aria in his *Five Preludes on English Hymn Tunes* for organ, which include Vaughan Williams's well-known 'Sine nomine', and other tunes by Clarke, Duncalf and Webbe.

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PAUL FRITTS

▲ 'Balance of style, inspiration and modern innovation': Paul Fritts's new organ for Lorain

A phoenix, designed

Invoking the legacy of John Brombaugh and his groundbreaking Opus 4, tragically lost to fire, Paul Fritts unifies tribute and innovation with breathtaking results, writes **Katelyn Emerson**

An organ dedication is always a joyous affair; but the recent such event at First Lutheran Church in Lorain (Ohio) generated an unusually intense sense of contentment and pride in all those attending, for whom more programmes had to be printed and extra seats provided. Some attendees were not yet aware that the panels on the doors

through which they entered were made of copper reclaimed from among the ashes of the church's previous organ, lost in a fire started by arsonists who remain uncaught. The loss of the 1924 church building, traumatic enough, was compounded by that of a singularly important instrument in the modern history of American organ building: John Brombaugh's Opus 4.

First Lutheran has always emphasised both congregational singing and music in general, emphases which resulted in the fortuitous 1962 appointment of David Boe as organist and choir director, the same year he became professor of organ at Oberlin Conservatory. It was thanks to Boe that the church hired John Brombaugh to build their new instrument, signing the contract in

1967 while Brombaugh was still working in Hamburg with Rudolph von Beckerath.¹ This was the first instrument built in the 30-year-old's shop and was an organ of innovations for 20th-century North American organ building with its flexible winding and (like Fisk's 1969 Opus 51) large wedge bellows, as well as unequal temperament and hammered pipe metal. These, of course, were all part of Brombaugh's early personal interpretation of his encounters with old organs in Europe. As such, the Brombaugh organ in Lorain was at the forefront of the arrival of such techniques in North America and was visited and studied by scholars, organists, and other builders until its shocking loss to flames and smoke in 2014.

How does one build a new organ in the wake of one so laden with emotion and significance? Moving with the agility enabled by such a tragedy, the church and its music director, Brian Wentzel (appointed in 2006), selected Paul Fritts & Co. Organ Builders (Tacoma, Washington) within nine months of the fire to do exactly that, in time to ensure that the organ's needs could influence the architecture and acoustical engineering of the space, rather than the other way around. Consequently, the ceiling height of the new multi-purpose sanctuary was determined by the organ's height.

'I just blurted out "30 feet!" without having a design for the case,' Paul Fritts laughs. 'I knew it had to be a rather tall instrument, so that was the first step.'

The organ committee wanted a 21st-century organ invoking 'the Brombaugh organ's spirit as well as following in its footsteps'² – but not a copy. Brombaugh and Fritts represent different steps in the North American absorption of 20th- and 21st-century Organ Reform sensibilities, an evolution that seeks to integrate and newly interpret renaissance and baroque influences, almost with each passing instrument. In the late 1970s, a Brombaugh employee even gave Paul Fritts a copy of the Lorain pipe order (with permission), a document Fritts credits with helping form his 'early foundation for how to scale an organ.' Acknowledging this shared history, he set out to build a modern instrument attuned to the musical tradition of the church.

The façade of Fritts's Opus 42 exemplifies the organ's overall balance of style, inspiration,

and modern innovation. This case expands that of the former Brombaugh with inspiration from Jan Albertsz Schut's 1693 case, originally in Amsterdam's Oude Lutherse Kerk and now in the Nieuwe Kerk in Middelburg (Netherlands). The polished 95 per cent tin façade pipes and their gold-leafed mouths are framed by pipe shades, intricately carved by Andreas Rink of Dresden, that affirm their Dutch-renaissance heritage in contrast to the facing contemporary windows. Carved dragons and trumpeting cherubim join provincial chickens and spiralling flowers beneath the benevolent gaze of St Margaret the Virgin. Three embossed pipes sit in the centre of each main tower, a detail drawn from the

against simple wooden panels, with brick above, which comprise the northern wall. The grill shading the Brust-position Swell division harmonises with the bricks behind the upper façade and with the wooden slats hiding the case entrances, while pushing the case's impost up several feet. These horizontal distinctions seem to hint at an organ loft, unifying a design that might raise an eyebrow in other circumstances. The remaining three walls provide contrast through the application of plaster and abstract stained glass.

As the sanctuary and all within it (including the organ) were insured, there was an eventual silver lining to the 2014 fire: an organ settlement. The Brombaugh was

How does one build a new organ in the wake of one so laden with emotion and significance?

Brombaugh. The illusion of flames licking their upper lips, a technique Fritts has used previously, seems poignantly reminiscent of the Pentecostal tongues of fire depicted in the previous organ's pipe shades.

The anachronism of this 17th-century-Dutch-inspired organ façade in a contemporary room is well synthesised by the room's architecture. The case stands

valued at US\$1.15 million at its perishing (the original price tag was US\$52,000),³ and the church wisely kept this money separate from the building settlement. Thus, the Fritts organ is a robust two-manual instrument that is nine stops larger than its predecessor – so robust, indeed, that it might easily have become a small three-manual organ. Not that the third manual is missed, ►

▼ John Brombaugh's Opus 4, which perished in an arson attack on the church in 2014, served as inspiration for the new instrument by Paul Fritts





◀ especially with the flexibility offered by the electric combination action (and sequencer). Solenoids are grafted to the traces of the mechanical stop action, preserving the integrity of the mechanical concept while offering modern technology's conveniences.

The pedalboard is flat and Fritts's signature Schnitgerian drawknobs sit in neat, offset rows, packed tightly between labels affixed to the console timbers, rather challenging to read for any organist unfamiliar with the instrument. As is Fritts's practice, the console is made of maple that is 'cooked', a process wherein the wood is heated inside a vacuum, thermally modifying it to increase durability and humidity resistance. Such highly desirable safety nets have resulted in cooked wood featuring throughout Fritts's organs. Cooking the maple to varying degrees creates different hues: no fewer than three distinct shades appear in the console alone. The natural colours of the oiled maple provide an organic contrast with the stout Douglas fir case.

The suspended mechanical key action employs carbon fibre trackers, which Fritts

◀ The console, with Fritts's Schnitgerian drawknobs

First Lutheran Church, Lorain, Ohio, USA

PAUL FRITTS & CO. (2019)

GREAT

Praestant	16	Spitzgedackt	4
Octave	8	Nasat	3
Rohrflöte	8	Octave	2
Quintadena	8	Blockflöte	2
Octave	4	Terz	1 ³ / ₅
Spitzflöte	4	Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃
Quinte	3	Mixture	IV-VI
Octave	2	Fagott	16
Tierce	1 ³ / ₅	Trompet	8
Mixture	IV-VI	Hautbois	8

SWELL

Principal	8		
Gedackt	8		
Violdigamba	8		
Voix celeste	8		
Octave	4		

PEDAL

Principal	16*
Octave	8
Bourdon	8
Octave	4
Nachthorn	2
Mixture	VI-VII
Posaune	16
Trompet	8
Trompet	4

*Low 6 pipes transmitted from Great
Praestant 16

Couplers Sw-Gt, Gt-Ped, Sw-Ped

Compass Manual: 58 notes; Pedal: 30 notes

Polished tin front pipes

Solid wood casework with carved pipe shades

Suspended, direct mechanical key action

Mechanical stop action

Multi-level combination system with divisionals, generals and sequencer

Tremulant

Wind Stabiliser

Zymbelstern

has used in two previous instruments. Here it is unexpected; there are no long tracker runs, and the room's humidity is mostly stable (with summer air conditioning and a constantly flowing baptismal font). On the basis of durability, however, the use of carbon fibre is becoming part of the Fritts signature. The action is smooth and light, granting precise tactile control, albeit perhaps too much ease in playing, especially on the plena. The touch is also regulated by the use of split pallets with single pulldowns well into the tenor range of both manuals' compasses, enabling double channels so the bass notes of wind-hungry flutes can be separate from those of principals, and reeds can be isolated as needed, avoiding tuning and winding issues. With the organ's low wind pressure – only 65-66mm – such thoughtful placement shows. The wind stabiliser is barely necessary, at least for those who listen and play attentively.

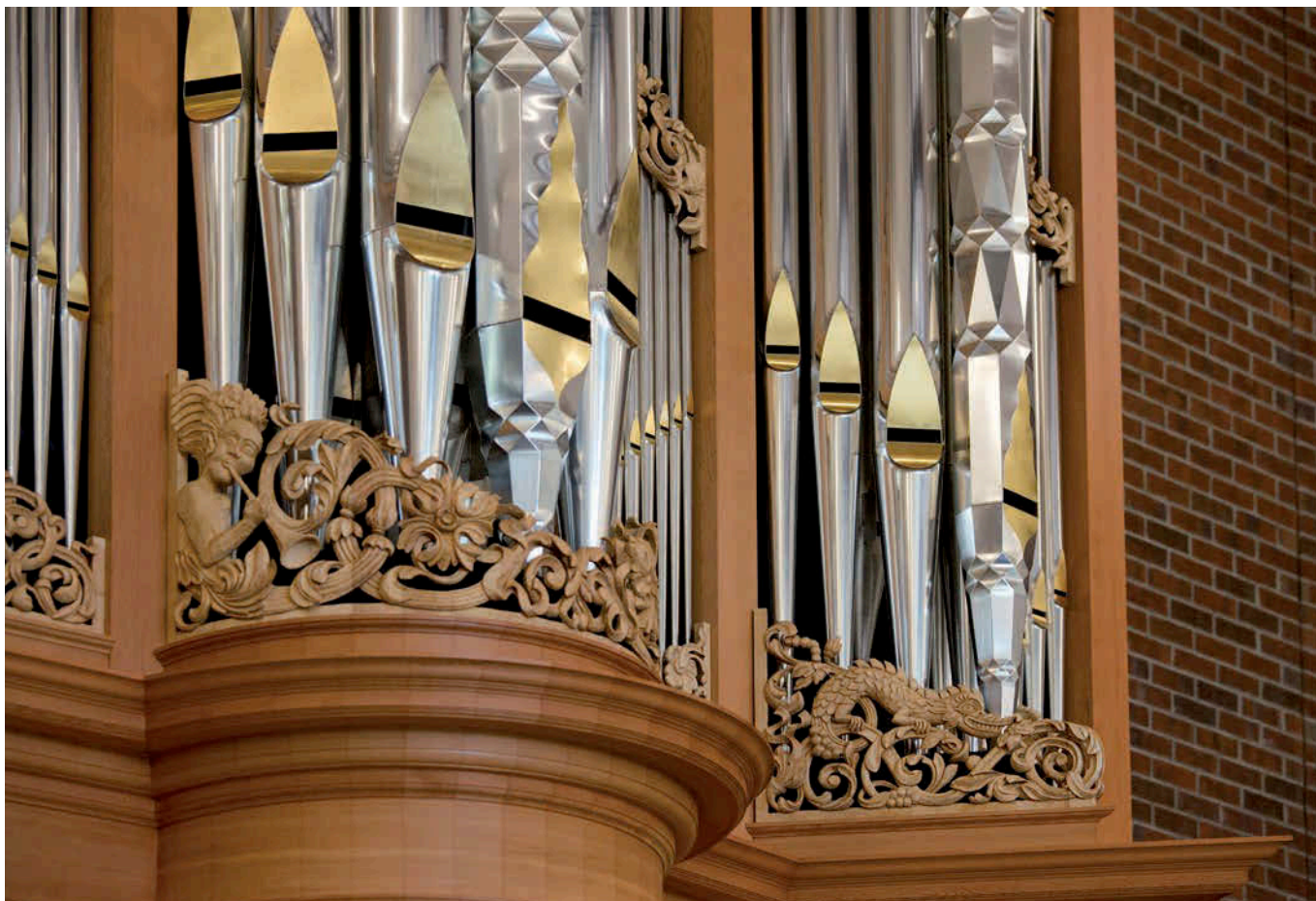
Fritts believes that divisions sound together best when mounted vertically, rather than some behind others, hence the Swell's location. This welcome enclosed division, a departure from Brombaugh's instrument, broadens the organ and choral repertoire possibilities. The Great sits above, divided to either side of the Pedal division, which reigns supreme in the centre. The tightly packed chests are efficiently laid out in major thirds down to the bass octave, which is planted in whole tones. Passage-boards behind all divisions render tuning access mostly straightforward, and no pipes within the swell box are shaded when the box's door closes. Fritts's self-confessed tendency to let practicality and longevity outweigh visual aesthetics behind the scenes is evidenced by the PVC ducts and flexible tubing to off-notes, which visually conflict with the beautiful interior joinery of poplar and white oak.

After encountering sand-casting while briefly working as a voicer for the GoART Schnitger project in Gothenberg (Sweden) and, later, for Flentrop on the St Katharinenkirche reconstruction in Hamburg (Germany), Fritts compared the results with those of more conventional methods and became convinced of its superiority. He describes this metal as

PAUL FRITTS



► Katelyn Emerson at the console



▲ The carving of the pipe shades creates an illusion of flames licking up the pipes

◀ performing more musically, perhaps because of its minute 'crystalline structure' caused by rapid cooling. In North America, only the Fritts shop casts solely in this way, tapering and hammering the metal (especially the 98 per cent lead alloy) to be thicker at the bottom, preventing sagging. In Lorain, the pipes are based on historic Schnitgerian exemplars, with rather high cut-ups and a minimum of nicking except 'rarely in the 2ft range', to avoid overly refining the speech. Naturally, all pipes are cut to length and cone-tuned.

In a comparatively small room (albeit one with around three seconds of audible decay), this rather large instrument finds its strength in variety – and not just in that of dynamics. Considering just the manual flutes, the Swell Gedackt 8 (a smooth chameleon) and Spitzgedackt 4 (a typical Brombaugh stop, chirpy and flirtatious) contrast with the Great Spitzflöte 4 (dark chocolate) and, most charmingly, Quintadena 8 (naked, crystalline).

The singing quality that characterises this organ is especially evident in the principals, which are consistently strong in fundamental. The lowest six notes of the manual 16ft (made of wood) are shared with those of the pedal, whose Principals 16, 8 and 4 are drawn from a single rank via mechanical octave transmission. The sole 16ft flue in the Pedal is a chameleon, underpinning the full plenum (until the arrival of the Posaune 16) or comfortably supporting the Swell Gedackt 8 until the box is at least half-closed.

The organ's seven reeds are evenly balanced in number and colour among the manuals and pedal. The Dulcian 8 on the Great, inspired by the stop of the same name on the former Brombaugh organ, is flamboyant and rich, complementing the Fagott 16 on the Swell (similar in colour, softer in volume). The other Great reed, a Trompet 8, contrasts its darker timbre with the Swell's brassy Trompet 8, inspired by Flentrop's Stellwagen reconstruction for

Hamburg (with early renaissance-style brass shallots, faced with tin down to the bass octave, which is open). The Pedal's reeds are Dutch/north German in construction and sound, resulting in a predominantly fundamental tone that commands bass lines, speaking with the promptness necessary for polyphonic virtuosity.

The Swell's Hautbois 8 is the only reed on Opus 42 modelled not on Schnitgerian but after Cavaillé-Coll examples. Aurally, it leans more toward the French baroque than romantic, but enclosing it grants it more strategic potential. The Violdigamba 8 and Voix celeste 8, also in the Swell, reveal a greater foray into the dispositional 'eclectic'. They can be forgiven for not quite clearly revealing a specific heritage, given that they too can be coloured by other stops to render them keener or gentler as the context demands. The celeste's soft undulation contrasts with the nervous Tremulant (which shakes the full organ in Dom Bedos style, if desired). The Swell's Principal 8

is voiced so smoothly that one almost instinctively reaches for romantic-era English music – except when the repertoire enters more sharp-laden key signatures, when the mild Bach-Kellner temperament makes it almost as uncomfortable to hear as such key signatures are to play.

The plenum is a full, well-balanced column of sound topped by mixtures unashamed of their own brightness and voiced for a full room of hearty singers. The pair of Great mixtures and the Larigot provide another tip of the hat to Brombaugh's 1970 organ. The various plena can be coloured by reeds without compromising the winding, creating a thrilling sonority.

An organ's façade can connect things novel to things dear, while its sound can transport the auditor from the mundane to the extraordinary. In Lorain, Paul Fritts ensured that the church's poignant organ history would not be forgotten in either sight or sound by this latest chapter. Fritts wanted this instrument to 'pay homage' to what came before it, but what he constructed was more: a tangible link to things lost and to the heart and the heritage of Brombaugh's organ, to which the new organ provides a supremely creative response. The hundreds who gathered for the dedication recital and the thousands who will hear Opus 42 in the future will listen not to past echoes. Instead they will experience the sounds of a world-class instrument whose witness and artistry deftly weave history, tradition, and new technological advances to create something paradoxically simple: beauty. ■

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Based in Stuttgart, Germany (DAAD Stipendium), Katelyn Emerson performs and teaches throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. She holds degrees from Oberlin College and Toulouse Conservatoire, and has won international prizes on three continents. katelynemerson.com



Freestyle BY GRAEME KAY

On girls moving through, micro-aggressions and phone zombies

'Joyful and triumphant...' ran the *Times* headline: '...cathedral choirgirls finally overtake the boys.' The source for the story was 'Cathedral Statistics 2018', a 49-page report published by the

Church of England. While the narrative stated that 'there were similar numbers of boy and girl choristers (740) in 2018, whereas in 2008 there were 100 more boy choristers than girl choristers', the accompanying bar graph seemed to indicate that there might be more girls than boys. Further digging by the *Times* elicited the information that the figures had been rounded up slightly – the actual numbers were 739 girls and 737 boys.

Since Salisbury became the first cathedral to admit girl choristers, in 1991, institutions have opened up opportunities for girls mainly by adding girl choirs or occasionally by creating new, mixed ensembles. Of themselves, these changes cannot therefore explain the steady decline in choirboy numbers since 2002. Other factors are likely to be at work, mostly to do with modern lifestyles which might be seen to count against the commitment required of children and parents to embrace the chorister lifestyle.

Chris Gray, director of music at Truro Cathedral, told the *Times* that 'pre-1991 it just wasn't a thing for there to be women or girls in cathedral choirs. But we now not only have girls singing top parts, but also girls singing alto parts.' And at Gloucester Cathedral, Adrian Partington voiced the widely held concern that, purely in terms of child psychology, 'in certain areas girls are better motivated than boys, and my fear is that when boys and girls combine on a daily basis, the boys can lose interest.'

A happy consequence of the *Times* report's publication before Christmas was that it was accompanied by a cute picture of Truro choristers with a reindeer.

The story behind the picture is that following a chance phone call to Chris Gray, choristers were able to meet the animals – from Feadon Farm Wildlife Centre – on the beach for a photo-op, resulting in the perfect image for the Cathedral Choir's Christmas concert.



▲ Truro choristers on the beach with a friend ...

COURTESY TRURO CATHEDRAL

Following the news that a London solicitor had been convicted of assaulting another ticket-holder at a performance of *Siegfried* at the Royal Opera House when the latter moved from row B of the stalls to row A in order to take an unoccupied seat, I can advise that it might be prudent to have your own solicitor, pugilistic or otherwise, accompany you when attending performances – not just to protect you from other punters, but possibly from the venue management. In the Covent Garden case, it was reported that the management – which takes a dim view of seat-filling opportunists – had sanctioned the assaultee with a ban, subsequently overturned. Sensitive readers won't need telling that the everyday scourge of live performances is mobile phones. At one major London venue, a friend of mine tapped another woman on the shoulder to suggest that she stop filming the performance, right after the PA announcement indicating that this was forbidden. The tappee immediately abandoned her seat, and her family, for reasons which became clear at the interval. My friend was confronted by staff, who explained that a formal complaint of assault had been made. Flabbergasted, my rule-follower was only moderately consoled to be told that the management had interviewed nearby punters who confirmed that the 'tap' had been a proportionate response to the original episode of bad behaviour. Blimey. ■

Graeme Kay is a digital platforms producer for BBC Radio 3 and 4.

NEW MUSIC – THE SEQUEL

Anna R. Matthews

With her day job now in the arts and culture sector, Anna Matthews talks to Shirley Ratcliffe about how composition is still a major part of her life and career

COURTESY ANNA MATTHEWS



▲ Composer by night: Anna Matthews

In 2011, *Choir & Organ* commissioned Anna Matthews to write an SATB anthem for Guildford Cathedral Choir. Setting the text *Come unto Me*, the work also celebrated the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. Since that time, Matthews has been following an absorbing career path. In this complementary series, it is emerging that some of our young composers are looking ‘outside the box’ for their career prospects. Currently working as a full-time cultural project manager, Matthews uses the evenings for her active life as a composer and performing flautist. ‘I learned piano and flute from a young age, and I now play the flute regularly with local orchestras,’ she explains.

‘I am really interested in how arts, culture and heritage can transform places and

change the lives of the people who live there. I spent a number of years managing projects in the public library sector, which included multi-million pound building projects and writing strategic plans. At the moment I am overseeing an Arts Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund programme called the ‘Great Place Scheme’, which pilots new approaches that enable cultural and community groups to work more closely together and to place heritage at the heart of communities.’

It is encouraging to hear that such a dedicated musician is working at the grass roots to add another dimension to peoples’ lives; but how does this part of her life fit into the music-making she so loves? ‘I find my “day job” stretches one part of my mind and composing stretches the other part, so it works well!’

In 2013 Matthews became involved with the Clore Leadership Programme. The inspiration of Dame Vivien Duffield, the Clore Leadership Programme was founded

my composing. Through the programme, I met so many interesting and influential leaders working in the arts. In particular, I learnt a lot about the “music world” from spending a few months in London and doing a secondment in the creative learning department of the Barbican and Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Being in the City also meant I had a huge variety of concerts on my doorstep. My peers on the Leadership Programme are very talented and successful individuals, and they continue to inspire me each day.’

Although based in the south-west of England, Matthews is by no means a regional composer. How does her music get advertised? ‘I have had performances of my work around the country, but it is in the south-west where I have the strongest network. I seek out calls for scores and competitions. I also maintain my website, which has given me some good leads.’

Does she consider her musical voice to have changed since she wrote for New

‘I am motivated by unusual sounds, different textures, shifting harmonies, and by non-musical concepts in sound, from science to landscape’

in 2003 by the Clore Duffield Foundation. The programme is a high-powered resource for leaders and aspiring leaders in the arts, culture and creative sectors. It is maintained by a partnership between private philanthropy and public funding. The Fellowship lasts for one year and includes residential courses, group workshops, projects and a tailor-made programme of personal and professional development.

‘I was awarded a Fellowship,’ Matthews explains, ‘and it was a really inspiring year. This was an amazing opportunity to develop my leadership within the cultural sector. Although it was mainly connected to my role as a project manager, it also helped

Music in 2011? ‘I think my musical voice has become clearer and stronger, but I don’t think it has changed. I am more confident in writing with my own voice. I once attended a workshop with Roxanna Panufnik, and I always remember her advice: to write what is in your heart.’

Matthews has been helped to form as a composer and enabled to explore fresh ideas by the composers and groups she has studied with at summer schools: James Weeks, Larry Goves and Michael Oliva with chamber groups Exaudi and rarescale, and at events organised by the national contemporary music network CoMA. What was her reason for doing this? ‘Although technology these

days means you can get a good sense of what your music sounds like while you work on it, it is really important to hear it “live”, not least so you can find out how it works for performers. Professional ensembles like Exaudi and Chroma are capable of trying out even the most challenging feats, so it is very exciting. As a composer you can be really creative and push your own limits. James, Larry and Michael all have different compositional styles, and I learned a lot from the short time I spent with each of them.’

The radical approach of Exaudi under James Weeks has long been dedicated to encouraging and helping develop the emerging generation of young composers at residencies. Matthews’s experience with them was at Dartington International Summer School. ‘Working with James and Exaudi was a joy, as they are such talented performers. I could really try out any idea I wanted and they encouraged me to be ambitious in my choral writing. At CoMA, Larry encouraged me to consider how to use musical form to help tell a story; and

from Michael’s tuition I have been able to experiment more with electronics in my music. I discovered Carla Rees’s ravescale through the summer school they run for flautists and composers. As I am both, I thought it was too good to miss, and I was right! This is where I met both Carla and Michael.’

Over the years Matthews has been inspired by many genres of music; what are her current motivations? ‘I am inspired by the creativity of others – art, language and music – especially music that is a bit “different”. I am motivated by unusual sounds, different textures, shifting harmonies, and by non-musical concepts in sound, from science to landscape. The thing that makes me most want to sit down and write, though, is the power and beauty of a choir.’

In 2004, Matthews felt impelled to write the choral work *Asvins*, a setting of sacred Hindu texts celebrating the dawn. ‘I was inspired by Holst’s *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda*.’ Matthews’s work was

programmed for the 2019 Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester Cathedral. Described as a late-night meditation on the Rig Veda, Vedic chant interspersed sensitive settings by Matthews, Roxanna Panufnik and Sally Lamb McCune to complement the beauty of the Holst work.

Based on her own experience, what advice would Matthews give to any young composers starting out? ‘First of all, to write music they can perform themselves, or write for ensembles they are already involved with and make recordings to share online. I’d also say try not to care too much what other people think. To be successful, the most important things are to be able to express confidently your own musical voice and to get your music heard.’

Does she have anything planned for the future? ‘Just to keep writing and exploring sound! I’ll write more choral music and intend to make a move into orchestral writing. I am also interested in making more use of electronic techniques.’ ■ annarmatthews.wordpress.com

▼ Working with James Weeks and Exaudi at Dartington International Summer School was ‘a joy’



JON CARTWRIGHT

RAISING STANDARDS



© EDWARD WEBB

David Hill is one of the UK's leading choral directors. He has made over 70 recordings in his various posts as chief conductor of the BBC Singers, and musical director of the Bach Choir and Leeds Philharmonic Society, among others. He is also associate guest conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

From the March/April 2015 issue of *Choir & Organ*; the complete archive is now available for subscribers to our 'digital' and 'print & digital' packages to explore (see page 40).

Edition

For those seeking to use an Urtext edition, Carus published one in 2010: highly recommended. Most will probably have a Novello choral score, to which I shall refer for this article.

Orchestration

Strings, 2 oboes, bassoons, flutes, clarinets, horns and trumpets, timps, and organ continuo, SATB solos, mixed choir.

Kyrie

Beethoven is never afraid to surprise, as the opening demonstrates. The basses, not normally expected to start proceedings, produce the first solitary sounds; teaching them to pitch it from the orchestral tuning is imperative. The music quietly and gently unfolds. Within eleven bars, the choir and orchestra have gone from hushed *piano* to *forte* in a wonderful arch-shaped choral texture.

Choral tip: Don't under-nourish the consonant attack. The 'k' of 'Kyrie' really helps to connect abdominal muscle support, ultimately engaging the breath more effectively.

The interplay between the soloists and choir is delightful and each should converse with the other. The word 'eleison'

It may be less well-known than the *Missa solennis*, but Beethoven's Mass in C is a glorious work – well worth exploring, writes **David Hill**

Beethoven's Mass in C was composed in 1807 and commissioned by Prince Nikolaus Esterházy II. It followed in the tradition of the late Masses of Haydn, also written for the Esterházy family, following Haydn's return from England in 1795. By 1802, Haydn was suffering a decline in his health, and so it was to Beethoven that the Prince turned. Unfortunately for Beethoven, Prince Nikolaus did not appreciate the Mass, and the composer stormed out of the royal presence in anger. Charles Rosen, in his best-known book *The Classical Style* (1971, 1997, New York: Norton) called the episode 'Beethoven's most humiliating failure'.

Michael Moore, programme notes editor for Philadelphia's Mendelssohn Club, takes a different view of the Mass, and one with which I fully concur: 'While (it) is often overshadowed by the immense *Missa solennis*, written some 15 years later, it has a directness and an emotional content that the latter work sometimes lacks.' It is one of the least performed of Beethoven's larger works, which is something of a mystery. That might be because singers (especially sopranos) are critical in general of Beethoven's writing for the voice; too high, unyielding in technical expectations. That may be borne out in the Ninth Symphony and *Missa solennis*; but the Mass in C shows a completely different aspect of Beethoven's style – almost as if he is writing in homage to Haydn, whose late Masses he will have known.

can have three or four syllables; my preference is for three, joining the 'e' and 'i' in the second syllable, the 'i' sounding as late as possible.

Conductors: Allow time for the harmony to speak clearly as it is fast-moving, particularly in the middle section before letter B and as far as C. Additionally, in order to capture the range of dynamics

Choral tip: SAY the text in time and with the correct dynamics. Singing it will then become much more straightforward.

One of Beethoven's techniques is to feature a soloist with the main text against a choral response, as in the section 'Gratias agimus tibi' (pp. 12-14). Once again, choirs often lose their way in remembering when to breathe and enter in confidence. Tempo

Beethoven's genius for creating tonal ambiguity is demonstrated in the opening of the Sanctus, which still shocks us by how daring it is

Beethoven demands, rehearse the whole choir in something like **Ex.1** – sharp, vivid contrasts of dynamic texture are essential to achieve in this style of music.

Gloria

This sets off in a declamatory and dramatic fashion, the 'gl' of 'Gloria' needing strong and early attack [**Ex.2**].

At letter A, the alto entry on 'bonae voluntatis' may need help from some sopranos, as it is high. Around this section, the choral entries might suffer should the breath flow be confused by the differing lengths of phrase.

relationships need careful consideration. Moving into the *Andante mosso* (p.16, soon after letter D) requires the pulse to remain roughly the same. The fast minim should become the new quaver. This section must not become slow and leaden, not least as the solo vocal lines should, ideally, be sung in one breath.

Conductors: The soloists should be given opportunity to work through their section carefully as a quartet, 'lending' each other the sound between moments when they are together.

On p.19 'miserere nobis' is a poignant phrase, the sopranos and tenors rising

Ex.1 Rehearse passages like this to capture the wide dynamic range.



Ex.2 The 'gl' of 'Gloria' needs a strong and early attack.



Ex.3 This breathing pattern will improve the attack.



simultaneously, a tenth apart. Tuning is challenging through here: the harmony needs to be expressive and clear.

The double bar at the end of this section indicates a possible new tempo, unrelated to the previous. Beethoven marks this *Allegro ma non troppo* (fast, but not too much). It needs to be lively, not hurried, and in two: *Allabreve*.

Conductors: Ensure the clarity of the fugal entries by balancing down other voices and orchestral textures and in a way that everything can still be heard.

Credo

Even though the Gloria feels and sounds lively, it is in the Credo that Beethoven introduces real speed: he marks it *Allegro con brio* (fast with vitality and energy). While it is dependent on where you perform the work, if it is possible to move along without blurring the textures, then do so: a speed of crotchet = 126/130 is exciting.

Letter B brings a dramatic key shift to E flat and each section of choir exclaiming 'God of God, Light of Light'.

Conductors

► This section needs strength and accuracy. Don't hesitate to ask 1st basses to join tenors, 2nd sopranos to join altos and (possibly) 2nd tenors to join basses. Firmness is key. At the bottom system of p.36, 'Omnia facta sunt', organise breathing as in **Ex.3**: it should improve the attack overall.

► The section beginning at letter C should feel 1 in a bar, though it will probably be wise to stay beating in 3.

► Handling the transition into *Adagio* (p.39) and the most expressive section of the movement, the relationship needs to be the old crotchet (3/4) equalling the new semiquaver. Pull back slightly to ensure it doesn't sound hurried. 'Et resurrexit' needs to set off excitedly, but not too quickly (*Allegro ma non troppo*), and in 4, the quaver from the previous section becoming the new minim. ► At letter L the *Vivace* can go as quickly as the singers and players can sing and play well! Pages 53 and 54 will benefit from slow rehearsal, chiefly in establishing correct pitching as Beethoven passes through a myriad of keys before a final blaze of C major.

Sanctus

Beethoven's genius for creating tonal ambiguity is so clearly demonstrated in the opening phrase for the choir. It still shocks and surprises us by how daring it is. It needs slow, careful rehearsal.

Conductors

► Intonation is an issue for all except a few choirs. Rehearse the soprano and bass parts so they sound unanimous. This should help the alto and tenor parts to slot in more easily. ► Starting the 'Osanna' *piano* as marked adds a whole new dimension to the setting of that word by baroque and classical composers; so when the *crescendo* begins, it can end *fortissimo* on a paean of praise.

Benedictus

Soloists are in the foreground in this movement; the choir is the important background, as in any great picture. Clarity,

and a unanimity of purpose need to be central here. To complete the movement, the repeat of 'Osanna' should be *forte* and joyful.

Agnus Dei

This should be *Andante*, not *Adagio*. The dark key of C minor does much of the scene setting.

Choral tip: Try to sing each phrase (in whichever part) in one breath, taken well in advance.

The work gradually moves towards C major, the tonal centre of the Mass. Letter B heralds the final section, once again *Allegro ma non troppo*, a telling marking for the whole Mass: it shouldn't be hurried. Just as one thinks it will remain settled, letter C produces more turmoil before Beethoven produces the sunniest music to close the work by recalling the material first heard in the Kyrie.

This really is a glorious work about which Beethoven himself said, 'I do not like to talk about my Mass, or generally about myself, but I believe that I have treated the text as it has seldom been treated before'. Who would disagree with that? ■

▼ Beethoven statue in Bonn



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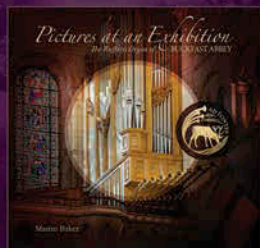
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Our restoration work at the Guild Church of St Margaret Pattens in the City of London was completed just in time for the Christmas festivities. Both the victorian mechanical action to the manuals and the twentieth-century tubular pneumatic action to the pedals have been returned to full working order. The fifteen longest front pipes, which had been replaced in zinc in a previous rebuild, have been re-made in traditional pipe metal, and the entire façade re-gilded. Important conservation work has been undertaken on the elegant Thomas Griffin casework of 1749. The blowing plant has been fully refurbished and re-located from the roof space to the back of the organ case, from where it now feeds directly into a brace of double-rise reservoirs. It is expected that the restored organ will play a major role in the church's already thriving musical programme.



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School's out

Music seems to bubble up from the ground each summer on the Dartington Hall estate. **Harriet Clifford** meets 2020's new artistic director, Sara Mohr-Pietsch, to discuss the vision behind her Summer School programme

You don't need to be talented to go to a summer school,' insists Sara Mohr-Pietsch, radio broadcaster and artistic director at Dartington Summer School and Festival, which runs from 25 July to 22 August this year. 'That's the really unique thing about Dartington – there just isn't anywhere else that mixes the amateur and the professional in such a comprehensive way, and that's what's really special about it.' In each of the four weeks, she explains, there is a choral course which can be taken with

no musical experience, for which reading music is not a requirement. At the same time, the Summer School attracts highly qualified conservatoire students, who hope that music will one day be their career.

The rich, 'hot-house' environment created on the Dartington Hall estate in Devon each summer brings together musicians and singers from all walks of life, offering four weeks of self-contained, week-long courses taught by professionals, performers, composers and practitioners. 'The other

thing is the serendipity, in that an amateur pianist finds themselves sitting next to Alfred Brendel at breakfast ... For amateur musicians or people who go to concerts regularly, it's not often that you get to have in-depth conversations with the people whom you're watching perform.'

Taking over from Joanna MacGregor, who curated her fifth and final Summer School and Festival in 2019, Mohr-Pietsch grew up attending Dartington, both as a participant and, later, as a volunteer. 'My earliest memories >

▼ Sara Mohr-Pietsch takes on the role of artistic director for Dartington Summer School and Festival 2020



KATE MOUNTNEY/STE



▲ The Big Choir comes together each morning to rehearse and perform a variety of repertoire, often alongside the Summer School's orchestras and soloists

◁ are of that sense of being in the broadest possible community and making friends across the ages ... I'd only ever hung out with people my age before, and becoming friends through a musical experience was really amazing. The other thing was just the feeling of this place being alive with music. You turn a corner and there's a bunch of people singing madrigals under a tree – it sounds ridiculously idyllic!

'I'd love to fill the place with as much singing as possible; that feels really important' – Sara Mohr-Pietsch

Idyllic, perhaps, but attending Dartington as a volunteer is a rigorous experience: 'You get a short burst of having to do everything. You learn so much – I know a lot of people who work behind the scenes in music who did a stint as a volunteer at Dartington.' For the participants, the experience can be as intense or as relaxed as they would like it to be. Someone who lives locally can drop in for the Big Choir each morning, but someone else might choose to stay on site, take several advanced courses and attend all of the concerts that week, the programme for which runs alongside the Summer School. 'You

could come with the family and take part in the Children's Choir and the Community Chorus, and go to the beach in your time off. There are lots of different ways of configuring it.' Camping is also available, making for a more affordable and accessible way of attending the event.

Since the Summer School started in 1925, it has been a tradition that each day begins with people singing together. Today, this takes

the form of the Big Choir, an SATB choir of mixed ability, but for which singers must be able to read music. The bursary students – particularly the advanced singers – are invited to participate too, and in each of the four weeks, the Big Choir courses focus on a different theme. 'I'd love to fill the place with as much singing as possible – that feels really important,' says Mohr-Pietsch. Week 1 sees the choir take 'A Mayflower Journey', marking the 400th anniversary of the pilgrim fathers' voyage from Plymouth and taking in repertoire from Gibbons, Campion, Byrd and Schütz to a new commission from US

composer-in-residence Nico Muhly. Week 2 presents the opportunity to sing Bach's B minor Mass, culminating in a performance with the Dartington Festival Baroque Orchestra and Dunedin Consort soloists.

With a nod to Beethoven's 250th anniversary year, in Week 3 the Big Choir takes on a new commission – *JOY!*, inspired by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and written by composer John Barber and librettist Hazel Gould. Mohr-Pietsch explains, 'We don't want to do the Mass in C again, we've done that. I actually thought the more interesting thing would be to take the Ninth Symphony's Ode to Joy as a starting point, because I think Dartington is a place to experiment and contemplate the way we live, together and in community and society. I feel as though we're facing extraordinarily challenging times at the moment – one of the things that an experience like Summer School can offer is a chance to look at that and to explore it together in community.' The text for the piece will be developed through workshops with children, refugees and local climate activists, rendering it 'really specific to Dartington and the community there.' In Week 4, the Big Choir tackles Duke Ellington's *Sacred Concerts*, a 'big, meaty, juicy piece of work, which not a lot of people know or get to perform in.'

As well as the Big Choir, there are many other opportunities for singers. Participants can learn renaissance polyphony with William Lyons and The City Musik in Week 1, and sing with members of Stile Antico in two courses throughout the week; vocal masterclasses with Simon Wall and Iestyn Davies are also on offer. In Week 2, masterclasses are run by Kate Semmens, Ben See and Dame Emma Kirkby, and the Dunedin Consort leads a Vocal Ensemble course in baroque motets. Week 3 offers the opportunity to take a Chamber Choir course with Alice Farnham, as well as a Song Class with Kitty Whately. In the final week, Exaudi's James Weeks leads the Chamber Choir, Black Voices a Gospel Choir, and Simon Lepper a Vocal Class. Harpsichordists can take courses with Jane Chapman in Week 1 and Steven Devine in Week 2.

Throughout the four weeks, more general courses are also available, including Future Sounds: Finding the Words, led by Mohr-Pietsch, in which she explores the complexity of using words to talk about music. Alongside this Future Sounds strand, Mohr-Pietsch has introduced Open Space in place of the fourth session each afternoon. One-off workshops and taster classes will be available, but also the opportunity to do something else: 'There are things that I see in Dartington which are bubbling under the surface, and I just want to bring them more into consciousness. One of them is around conversations, because interesting conversations happen at Dartington all the time, and they tend to happen accidentally. But setting up the Open Space and running courses in writing and radio making, which are specifically about music, are ways of encouraging people to engage in conversation about music.'

Part of Mohr-Pietsch's vision for Dartington is sparking these conversations and raising questions about how people talk about classical music: 'We're stuck in some place where classical music is not something that culturally we feel comfortable discussing. That's something in my work that I'd like to help shift.' As a presenter on BBC Radio 3, Mohr-Pietsch feels that her perspective as a listener and communicator has informed her approach to programming at Dartington: 'I think the best skill is curiosity. I spend all of my time not just listening to music and

listening to artists talking about the music that they make, but also really listening to our audiences.' Her predecessor, whom she describes as an 'extraordinary programmer', was a concert pianist, so Mohr-Pietsch believes that she brings something a bit different.

The 2020 programme focuses on new works more explicitly than in previous years, which Mohr-Pietsch explains helps to bring classical music to the here and now. 'If we're not engaging dynamically with music as something that is alive and as something that needs to be responded to in the present moment, we'll never learn from it what we all know we can achieve from music – how to live better together.' She believes that now is a 'uniquely interesting moment', as young audiences are coming to classical music without preconceptions about its being irrelevant or stuffy.

What would success look like for Dartington's artistic director? 'I think for

me, success will be if everybody leaves Summer School in 2020 having tried something new, having learned more about themselves and about music through other people, and having made friends.' She also hopes participants will have experienced a personal journey: 'You might be someone who sings in choral societies all the time but you come in Week 4 and sing Duke Ellington for the first time, and it opens up a whole new thing for you. Or you've always been a little bit shy about singing in front of people and you take a singing workshop and stand up and sing in front of people, and that's your leap. It doesn't really matter what the leap is, but everyone there is encouraged to feel safe to do that.' ■

Booking for Dartington Summer School and Festival is now open at dartington.org/summerschool or by calling the office on +44 1803 847080. The concert programme running alongside the courses will be released in March.

▼ Bursary students are invited to sing with the Big Choir



KATE MOUNT

Locations and phone numbers are in the UK unless otherwise stated.

ORGAN

ASSOCIATION JEHAN ALAIN: INTERNATIONAL ORGAN COURSE 2020

Improvisation course

12-19 Jul, Romainmôtier, Switzerland

Work by 'total immersion', in class lessons, workshops and daily individual lessons. The course is open to participants of all levels.

Interpretation course

19-26 Jul, Romainmôtier, Switzerland

Work in groups and individually; round-tables with two teachers.

Course for Parish Organists

22-23 Jul, Romainmôtier, Switzerland

Accompaniment of all sorts of songs (all denominations), simple improvisations and repertoire suitable for church services.

Contact +41 32 721 2790,
+41 79 356 42 91
secretariat.cior@jehanalain.ch
jehanalain.ch

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC – SUMMER@EASTMAN

Summer Organ Academy

28 Jun-2 Jul, Eastman School,

Rochester, NY, USA

A five-day intensive workshop for pre-college and undergraduate organists.

Contact Andrea Schuler,
Summer@Eastman program
coordinator +1 585 274 1074,
summer@esm.rochester.edu
summer.esm.rochester.edu

INTERNATIONAL ORGAN FESTIVAL HAARLEM

Summer Academy for Organists

20-21 Jul, Haarlem, Netherlands

26 courses taught by distinguished organists, featuring specialties such as Bach, Widor, Brahms, improvisation and more. The focal point of the academy is the world-famous Christian Müller organ in St Bavo's Church.

Contact Peter Ouwekerk,
+31 6 28426504
office@organfestival.nl
organfestival.nl

OUNDE FOR ORGANISTS

Pulling out the Stops

16-18 Apr, Oundle,

Northamptonshire, UK

Early stage and beginners course.

Summer School

13-19 Jul, Oundle,

Northamptonshire, UK

For advanced and more experienced young organists.

OFO Abroad

13-16 Apr, Copenhagen,

Denmark

For experienced organists over 18.

Contact +44 1832 274919
courses@oundlefestival.org.uk
oundlefororganists.org.uk

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS (RCO)

RCO Easter Course

15-17 Apr, Merton College, Oxford,
UK

Provides in-depth tuition for those preparing to take (or considering) the College's diploma examinations.

Scandinavia Study Trip

17-21 May, Denmark and Sweden

For advanced players with tuition from Bine Bryndorf and Richard Brasier.

The Organ Student Experience

4-9 Aug, Cambridge, UK

For teenage organists of grade 7 and above, especially those preparing for or considering auditioning for organ scholarships at universities or cathedrals/churches, or for conservatoire entry.

RCO Summer Course for Organists

3-8 Aug, St Giles Cripplegate

Church, London, UK

Offers tuition for complete beginners up to diploma level in the form of lessons, skills classes, masterclasses, performance opportunities and practice time.

Contact Simon Williams,
+44 20 3865 7003
simon.williams@rco.org.uk
rco.org.uk

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Summer Organ Week 2020:

From the Old World ... to the New

25 Jul-1 Aug, University of
St Andrews, Scotland, UK

Contact Chris Bragg,
+44 1334 462226
music@st-andrews.ac.uk
st-andrews.ac.uk

WESTMINSTER CHOIR COLLEGE Organ Institute

19 Jul-1 Aug, Westminster Choir
College, Princeton, NJ, US

Contact Scott R. Hoerl,
+1 609 924 7416
woce@rider.edu
rider.edu

▼ The Craighead-Saunders organ in Rochester, New York, plays a central role in the Eastman Summer Organ Academy



STEPHEN KENNEDY

CHORAL

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH CHORAL DIRECTORS (ABCD)

Cambiata North West Boys Singing Workshops

18 Jan and 8 Mar, Macclesfield, UK
Ian Crawford and Andy Brooke lead two days of singing workshops for boys aged between 10-18.

Initial Course

21 Mar, 25 Apr, 13 Jun, 4 Jul,
London, UK

Designed to lay firm foundations for anyone who has an interest in learning to lead singing of any kind, or who has recently started to conduct a choir.

Emerging & Progressive Course

14-15 Mar, 6-7 Jun, 12-13 Sep,
London, UK

The Emerging Course is designed for those with experience in singing and/or conducting to develop existing skills, while the Progressive Course is for those who work with at least one choir on a regular basis.

Young Conductor Course at the Annual Convention

28-30 Aug, Birmingham, UK

Festival Conducting Course

27-28 Aug, Birmingham, UK

Contact Elisabeth Brierley,
+44 7805 454563
elizabeth.brierley@abcd.org.uk
abcd.org.uk

AUSTRALIAN CHORAL CONDUCTORS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ACCET Choral Conductor Summer School

20-23 Jan, Xavier College, Kew,
Melbourne, Australia

Choral conductor training for conductors of church, community and school choirs.

Contact Faye Dumont, +61 9818 1296
contact@choralconductors.org.au
choralconductors.org.au

BENSLOW

Various dates, Benslow Music,
Hitchin, Hertfordshire, UK



COURTESY ROYAL COLLEGE OF ORGANISTS

▲ The Royal College of Organists offers a wide range of courses throughout the year

Consort Singing and Original

Sources: William Byrd and Thomas Tallis

13-15 Mar

The Benslow Gospel Choir

1-3 May

Gregorian Chant: The Joys of Singing

4-7 May

Come and Sing with Suzi Digby

25 May

Sarah Leonard's Vocal Summer School

3-7 Aug

Christopher Gayford's Conducting Summer School

7-10 Aug

Madrigal and Partsong Summer School

10-13 Aug

Contact +44 1462 459446
info@benslowmusic.org
benslowmusic.org

CAMBRIDGE EARLY MUSIC: BAROQUE AND RENAISSANCE SUMMER SCHOOLS

Baroque Summer School

26 Jul-2 Aug, Cambridge, UK

Renaissance Summer School

2-9 Aug, Cambridge, UK

Contact +44 844 808 2412
info@cambridgeearlymusic.org
cambridgeearlymusic.org

CSSM SUMMER SCHOOL OF MUSIC

1-8 Aug, Uppingham School,
Rutland, UK

Contact Gareth Huw Davies,
+44 7973 430852
info@cssm.org.uk
cssm.org.uk

DARTINGTON INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL

Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon, UK

Four weeks of shared music-making, learning and listening, from early music to jazz.

Courses for all ages and abilities, accompanied by over 70 concerts.

Big Choir: A Mayflower Journey

Week 1: 25 Jul-1 Aug

Big Choir: Bach B minor Mass

Week 2: 1-8 Aug

Big Choir: Beethoven and JOY!

Week 3: 8-15 Aug

Big Choir: Duke Ellington

Week 4: 15-22 Aug

Contact +44 1803 847080
summerschool@dartington.org
dartington.org

EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC – SUMMER@EASTMAN

Choral Masterworks – Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem

25-28 Jul, Eastman School, Rochester,
NY, USA

In-depth analysis and rehearsal.

The Complete Conductor – Focus of the Renaissance

30 Jul-2 Aug, Eastman School,
Rochester, NY, USA

A four-day workshop focused on topics addressed by choral directors and accompanists in the context of choral singing.

Singing Gregorian Chant and Renaissance Polyphony – Chicago

3-7 Aug, Saint Clement Church,
Chicago, IL, USA

The course will balance exposure to the genres and styles of traditional western plainchant with the study and execution of renaissance vocal polyphony.

Contact Andrea Schuler,
Summer@Eastman program
coordinator, +1 585 274 1074
summer@esm.rochester.edu
summer.esm.rochester.edu

ENGLISH CHORAL EXPERIENCE ECE Abroad

15-22 Apr, Saint-Pargoire,
France

Camerata Bach Family Motets

16-17 May, Winchester, UK

The English Choral Experience Week at Abbey Dore

19-25 Jul, Herefordshire, UK

Contact ece@paulspicer.com
englishchoralexperience.co.uk

COURTESY ABCD



▲ Conducting festival run by the Association of British Choral Directors

◀ **EUROPEAN CHORAL ASSOCIATION**
EuroChoir 2020

24 Jul-3 Aug, Ireland

For singers between 18 and 30 years old.

Contact +49 228 912 5663
info@europeanchoralassociation.org
europeanchoralassociation.org

HAROLD ROSENBAUM CHORAL CONDUCTING WORKSHOP
Columbia University 5-Day Workshop

6-10 Jan, Columbia University, NY, USA

New York University 5-Day Workshop

17-21 Aug, New York University, NY, USA

Contact +1 914 582 3915
haroldrosenbaum@gmail.com
haroldrosenbaum.com

HELICON ARTS

Various dates, Galicia, Spain

Sacred Choral Course with Neil Ferris

22-29 Aug

Secular Choral Course with Mary King

29 Aug-5 Sep

Contact +44 3333 44564
info@heliconarts.co.uk
heliconarts.co.uk

MIDLANDS EARLY MUSIC FORUM

Workshop for Voices and Baroque Instruments

21 Mar, venue TBA
Directed by Will Carslake.

Hail Queen of Heaven

9 May, venue TBA

Directed by Will Dawes.
Contact secretary@memf.org.uk
memf.org.uk

MUSICA ANTICA A MAGNANO

13-21 Aug, Magnano, Italy

Contact Via Roma 43, 13887 Magnano (BI), Italy
info@musicaanticamagnano.com
musicaanticamagnano.com

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Chamber Choir and Choral Conducting Workshop

9-16 Aug, Norfolk, CT, USA

Contact +1 203 432 1966
norfolk@yale.edu
norfolk.yale.edu

OXFORD UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Oxford Choral Singing Summer School

28 Jun-5 Jul, St Stephen's House, Oxford, UK

A practical course for singers focused on the English choral tradition, suitable for students, educators and other able musicians.

Contact Caroline Airey,
+44 1865 280358
ipmusic@conted.ox.ac.uk
conted.ox.ac.uk

RISTRETTO SUMMER ACADEMY Summer Academy in Provence

1-9 Aug, Lumières, near Avignon, France

A week of intensive choral study involving a challenging a cappella repertoire, directed by founder-member of the Hilliard Ensemble Errol Girdlestone.

Contact Kate Cobb, +33 4932 06894
choralsummer@aol.com
ristrettovoices.com

THE RODOLFUS FOUNDATION

Various dates and locations in the UK

Junior Choral Courses (age 8-15)

12-18 Apr, Uppingham

26 Jul-1 Aug, Cheltenham

13-19 Aug, Wellington

Senior Choral Courses (age 16-21)

12-19 Jul, Eton

31 Jul-7 Aug, Eton

19-26 Aug, Cambridge

22-29 Aug, Oxford

Contact Helen Bennett, helen@therodolfusfoundation.com,
Charlotte Mahony, charlotte@therodolfusfoundation.com,
Tim Teague, tim@therodolfusfoundation.com
therodolfusfoundation.org.uk

ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC (RSCM)

Residential Choir

3-9 Aug, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, Suffolk, UK

Contact +44 1722 424843
education@rscm.com
rscm.org.uk

RUN BY SINGERS

The Glory of Venice

18-22 Mar, Venice, Italy

A programme of Venetian and

non-Venetian choral masterpieces accompanied by organ and trumpet; directed by Will Dawes.

Ávila Early Music Week

17-24 May, Ávila, Spain

Directed by David Allinson.

RBS 100 - Voyage to Odessa

14-21 Jun, Odessa, Ukraine

The programme will be a mix of Russian, Baltic and British music, culminating in a concert in the Odessa Philharmonic Hall; directed by Nigel Perrin.

Return to Dresden

19-26 Jul, Dresden, Germany

Directed by Peter North.

Assisi Summer School

2-9 Aug, Assisi, Italy

An advanced week concentrating on unaccompanied renaissance polyphony, for good sightreaders; directed by David Skinner.

Cambridge Summer School

16-23 Aug, Cambridge, UK

A mixed programme of American and British church music, directed by Anton Armstrong (US).

Lincoln Summer Schools

23-28 Aug, Lincoln, UK

Course One: Renaissance Masterpieces

Course Two: Music of Living Composers

Directed by David Allinson and David Ogden.

Cathedral Weekend

28-30 Aug, Manchester, UK

The opportunity to sing two Evensong services at Manchester Cathedral, under the tuition of Peter North.

Early Music Week in Burgos

30 Aug-6 Sep, Burgos, Spain

A week of a cappella renaissance music directed by Rory McCleery.

Eternal Music of the Eternal City

13-20 Sep, Rome, Italy

A programme of polyphony under the direction of David Skinner.

Transylvanian Adventure

18 Oct-25 Sep, Brasov, Romania

Directed by Jeremy Jackman.

Mozart Requiem at Midnight

2-5 Dec, Vienna, Austria

Sing Mozart's Requiem at midnight, the hour of his death, in the baroque Karlskirche; directed by Nigel Perrin.

Contact +44 1462 893972

info@runbysingers.org

runbysingers.org

SARTEANO CHAMBER CHORAL CONDUCTING WORKSHOP

Various dates, Sarteano, Tuscany, Italy

Mixed Repertoire Session

15-23 Jul

Musica Sacra Session

27 Jul-4 Aug

Contact Gail Leicher,

+1 781 652 0158

sarteanochoral@rcn.com

sarteanochoralworkshop.com

SHERBORNE SUMMER SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Various dates, Sherborne, Dorset, UK

Cappella Chamber Choir

2-9 Aug

For keen choral singers of a reasonably accomplished standard; repertoire will centre around women composers.

Voices in Harmony

2-9 Aug

A course for singers without the pressure of having to read music.

Choral Course: from Sea to Symphony

9-16 Aug

From Beethoven, through Grieg, Kverno, Dufay, Stravinsky to Vaughan Williams, concluding with a concert accompanied by a large orchestra.

The Lighter Side Choral Course

9-16 Aug

Approachable repertoire concluding in a concert at the end of the week.

The Art of Choral Direction

9-16 Aug

For conductors of all levels of experience; directed by Amy Bebbington and supported by the Association of British Choral Directors.

Contact +44 1342 893963

summermusicsschool@btinternet.com

sherbornesummerschoolofmusic.org

sherbornesummerschoolofmusic.org

SING FOR PLEASURE

Siena Trip: Spring 2020

15-19 Apr, Siena, Italy

Contact +44 800 0184 164

events@singforpleasure.org.uk

singforpleasure.org.uk

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Bach Choral Course

Jul, University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK

For singers aged 16 and over.

Contact +44 1334 462226

music@st-andrews.ac.uk

st-andrews.ac.uk

WESTMINSTER CHOIR COLLEGE

Various dates, Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ, US

Beginning Choral Conducting

22-26 Jun

Choral Conducting Intensive

22-26 Jun

Conducting Institute

28 Jun-4 Jul

Choral Institute at Oxford

7-16 Jul, Oxford, UK

Choral Pedagogy Institute

27-31 Jul

Courses for adults.

Vocal Institute

19 Jul-1 Aug

Course for high school students.

Contact Scott R. Hoerl, +1 609 924 7416

woce@rider.edu

rider.edu

▼ The Rodolfus Foundation runs junior choral courses for singers aged 8-15



VIA BRETT COURTESY OF THE RODOLFUS FOUNDATION

Music of the spheres

Anders Hillborg is the latest composer to enjoy the full-on attention of BBC forces in a forthcoming Total Immersion event, based at London's Barbican Centre. **Graeme Kay** reports

‘Anyone who enters Anders Hillborg’s world of sounds is in for a surprise,’ says the introduction to one of the leading Swedish composer’s CD recordings. ‘Complexity rubs shoulders with directness, sensuality with humour, hypnotic meditation with pulsating rhythms, and all is combined with an original sense of form and unfaltering craftsmanship.’

If Hillborg’s approach has led to his music being championed by such eminent conductors as Gustavo Dudamel, David Zinman, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the BBC Symphony Orchestra’s chief conductor, Sakari Oramo, so direct is its appeal that it has also been taken to the hearts of audiences worldwide.

The BBC has been a staunch supporter, with Hillborg’s music making 11 appearances at the Proms since 2004, including pieces with typically evocative and playful titles such as *Exquisite Corpse*, *Liquid Marble*, *Bach Materia* (Hillborg’s response to a set of multi-composer companion pieces to Bach’s ‘Brandenburg’ Concertos), *Sirens* and *Beast Sampler* –

soundtrack, Hillborg would be his man.’

In 2001 – *A Space Odyssey*, Kubrick made powerful use of choral music by György Ligeti; as Hillborg himself acknowledges, Ligeti’s ‘Lux Aeterna’ was an inspiration and it shares certain qualities with Hillborg’s own writing for choirs and voices – this part of his output will be showcased by the BBC Singers in a St Giles Cripplegate concert conducted by Ragnar Rasmussen as part of Total Immersion.

In fact, it was choral singing which provided Hillborg (b.1954) with his first musical experiences: ‘Through singing, I learned about intervals and got an organic sense of how music is constructed,’ he tells *C&O*. ‘It has shaped all my music, not only choir music – when you sing, you gain a sensitivity for the horizontal, the line, the melody; the only instrument I play is piano, and with a piano you cannot get the feel for the line – the piano is a machine, whereas when you sing, you actually physically feel the difference between a small and a large interval. This is crucial for achieving a sensitivity for melodic writing, I believe.’

‘Through singing, I got an organic sense of how music is constructed ... it has shaped all my music’

it was the latter orchestral work which prompted the *Times* critic to exclaim: ‘Spectralism writ large: more please’. *Peacock Tales*, Hillborg’s theatrical clarinet concerto for Martin Fröst, displayed a sense of humour and the absurd, resulting in the piece being taken up with enthusiasm in several different versions and racking up a large number of performances, another of which – the ‘Millennium Version’ – will take place with Fröst as part of the BBC’s Total Immersion event on 22 February.

More spectralism was provided just a year ago with the London Philharmonic’s premiere, under Marin Alsop, of its co-commissioned work, *Sound Atlas*, in which Hillborg’s sound palette added crotales, a paint tin, vibraslap, guiro and Chinese opera gongs to the centrally important glass harmonica. ‘Music of the far expanses of the universe,’ wrote one critic. ‘If Stanley Kubrick came back to remake *2001* and needed a

At the same time, Hillborg was also involved in various forms of improvised music, but from 1976 to 1982 he undertook formal study of counterpoint, composition and electronic music at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, where his teachers included Gunnar Bucht, Lars-Erik Rosell, Arne Mellnäs and Pär Lindgren. Brian Ferneyhough, who was a guest lecturer at the College of Music on several occasions, was also an important source of inspiration.

And in 1983 it was with a choral work, *Mouyayoum* for mixed choir a cappella, that Hillborg notched up an early success, following his decision the previous year to become a full-time composer. The piece – now his most performed work and regarded as standard repertoire for accomplished choirs – riffs on a rhythmically complex overtone series unadorned with words. But at the time, the touring organisation Svenska Rikskonserter, which had

► Complexity rubbing shoulders with directness: Swedish composer Anders Hillborg

►



▲ Hillborg's wordless *Mouyayoum* plays with rhythms and the harmonic series

◀ commissioned the piece, thought it unperformable. 'I received a letter which stated that they would never commission another piece from me, since my music was unplayable,' Hillborg recalled to journalist Sofia Nyblom. 'I had originally set a text by e.e. cummings to music – everyone was doing it at the time! But the text killed the music and vice versa... so I just got rid of the words.' Speaking to *C&O*, Hillborg adds, 'Similar to Mongolian throat singing, I found it liberating to write a piece for voices, where there was no semantic burden to obscure the music. I view the voice in the same way I view any other instrument. Of course, the voice is capable of conveying semantic content, and in this way it's different from all other instruments. That said, I don't feel there has to be a text when I compose for voice.' The result, in the words of a US reviewer who heard *Mouyayoum* performed by the Swedish Radio Choir, was a piece in which 'the singers, intoning

sliding vowels, sound like instruments in some eerie celestial orchestra, sliding in on a whoosh of air from the void, occupying earth with their captivating babel, and exiting on another rush of air back to the void whence they came. It was mesmerising – stunningly difficult, stunningly simple.'

Certain to be a highlight of the upcoming BBC Singers concert, which it opens, *Mouyayoum* is followed by a sequence of other pieces spanning 40 years: *The Cradle Song* (words by William Blake), *O Dessa Ögon*, *Lilla Sus Grav*, *Stella Maris*, and the UK premiere of a new work, *The Breathing of the World*.

Scored originally for soprano and string orchestra, *O Dessa Ögon* will be performed in the version for soloist and male chorus. The work is a setting of one of a cycle of 136 poems comprising the *Diwan Trilogy* by Gunnar Ekelöf (1907-68), Sweden's most translated poet. In Part 2, 'The Tale of Fatumeh', the protagonist is a girl sold into prostitution by her mother, then for a while kept as a concubine by a prince, abandoned but surviving by force of spirit. *O Dessa Ögon*, is a meditation: 'Oh, these eyes, in the darkness, leaning over me, a darkness of a thousand eyes, and a thousand awe-inspiring spaces... This is your beloved's face, immobile, bent over your fate. But why so hard eyes?'

'*Lilla Sus Grav* is a poem by Chinese poet Li He, who lived during the mid-Tang dynasty, c.790-816,' explains Hillborg. 'Composed in 1979, it's the first piece I wrote after having started my formal training at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Although it's very short, about four minutes, it's scored for 16-part choir.'

The Breathing of the World, which receives its UK premiere, is scored for mixed choir, soprano saxophone and cello, and was commissioned by conductor Gary Graden for his S:t Jacobs Kammarkör in Stockholm. 'The text is my own,' adds Hillborg: 'a lyrical celebration of nature with melancolic undertones, reflecting on the state of our planet.'

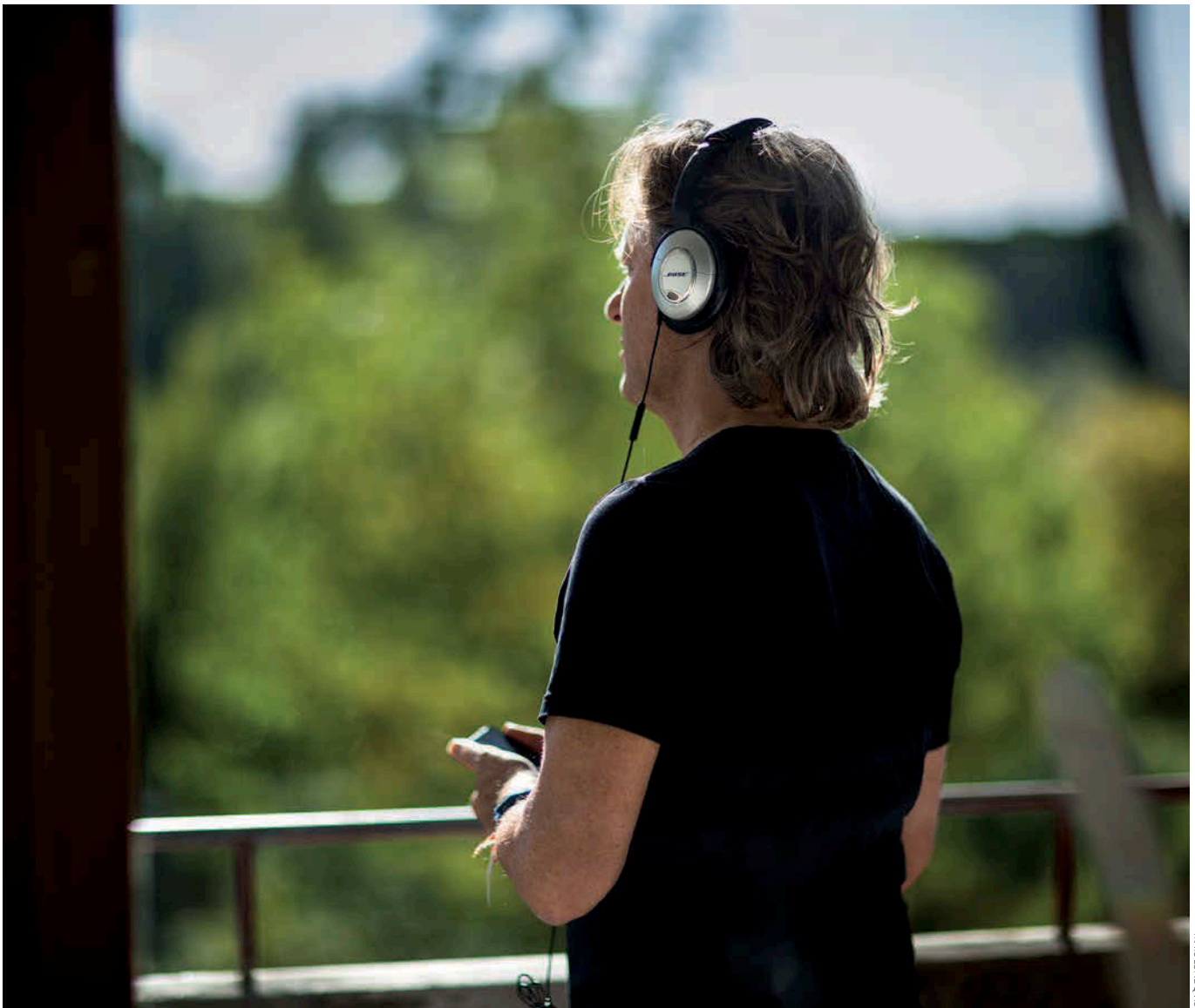
Planned in collaboration with the BBC Singers, Hillborg's choral programme includes Messiaen's *O sacrum convivium*, Sven-David Sandström's *Four Songs of Love*, Steven Stucky's *Cradle Song no.2* ('Lulajze, Jezuniu') and Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Songs from Kalender röd*. 'The Messiaen is, of course, a classic – I've always loved it, and the others are beautiful pieces written by my composer friends: I wanted to salute them in this way.'

BBC publicity for the Total Immersion event bills Hillborg as a 'maverick', perhaps nodding in recognition of the fact that the composer is seen to bridge the gap between the pop and classical worlds; but although some of his subjects – including *Vaporized Tivoli*, loosely inspired by a Ray Bradbury story of a nightmarish funfair that comes to town,

might be thought to veer in the direction of the skittish – there is no doubt that Hillborg's output, which has been described as 'an intoxicating encounter with sound, sometimes intimidating, sometimes sweet' engages with a musical palette which is completely under control in terms of the effects he intends to achieve. And as has been widely observed, the steady stream of commissions and residencies with which his career has been studded suggests that musicians love performing his work. Hillborg's forthcoming visit to London is one which he anticipates with relish: 'It's an incredible occasion – a huge privilege and an enormous honour to hear so much of your music being performed during just one day. The BBC has marvellous ensembles; one stunning aspect is the incredibly fast learning curve – a very important asset when rehearsal time is limited.' hillborg.com ■

'Total Immersion: Anders Hillborg' takes place at London's Barbican Centre on Saturday 22 February. The event includes: Camilla's Classical: Anders Hillborg & Ivan's Childhood – Camilla Lundberg's documentary examining Hillborg's life and work (10.30am); Hillborg's chamber music, introduced by the composer (Milton Court Concert Hall, 1.30pm); the BBC Singers performing Hillborg's choral music including O Dessa Ögon, Mouyayoum and the UK premiere of The Breathing of the World (St Giles Cripplegate, 4pm); Talk – Meet the composer (6pm); and Sakari Oramo conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Hillborg's music including the UK premieres of Peacock Tales and the Violin Concerto (Barbican Hall, 7.30pm).

Graeme Kay is a former editor of Classical Music, Opera Now and BBC Music magazines. He is a digital platforms producer for BBC Radio 3 and 4.



MATS LUNDQVIST



Work in progress

The world comes together in the workshop of organ builders Casavant Frères.

Stephen Pritchard reports. PHOTOS COURTESY CASAVANT FRÈRES

Typhoons don't often feature in the shaping of an organ design, but Casavant Frères, Canada's old-established instrument builders, work all over the world and take such things in their stride.

When the original 1850 Cathedral of the Nativity of our Lady in Macau was destroyed 24 years after its consecration in one of the huge storms that sometimes rage on the south coast of China, its 1937 neo-classical

replacement was built entirely in solid concrete to withstand the fury of future typhoons.

Casavant is currently building a new four-manual instrument, with 43 independent stops, 54 ranks of pipes and electrically operated slider-and-pallet windchests. 'It was quite a challenge to design a façade for this organ,' said designer Benoît Gendron. 'I wanted to create it with a strong focal point. In collaboration with our artistic

director Jacquelin Rochette, I had a clear idea of the different divisions and their location in the cathedral space. An element that immediately captured my attention was the magnificent stained-glass windows overlooking the altar. From there bloomed the idea of creating an immense altarpiece.

'The main organ, which tonally will lean towards the French style, is divided into two narrow towers on each side of the altar. The central part was designed to frame the

stained-glass windows, and on a bridge a *trompette en chamade* will be installed, surrounded by a group of cherubs.’

It’s just one example of the local conditions that all organ builders have to take into account when installing a new instrument. Not that typhoons or solid concrete should trouble the other seven major projects currently in progress in the workshop of Casavant Frères in St-Hyacinthe, Quebec, where they have been established since 1879.

The firm is currently building a four-manual organ – with a second, moveable console, as in all the instruments they have installed in mainland China so far – in the new China Philharmonic Orchestra Hall in Beijing. With 60 independent stops, 79 ranks of pipes and a façade inspired by the lotus flower, it is Casavant’s fourth instrument to be installed in a concert hall in mainland China.

Casavant’s president, Simon Tétreault, explains: ‘We are pleased to have the opportunity to work with the China Philharmonic Orchestra, one of the most active among professional orchestras in China, and to make them an instrument for their new concert hall in Beijing. For the past decade, interest in classical music has been rising considerably in China. Private and public schools, teachers and parents are paying more attention and making more commitment to music education. As one of the oldest pipe organ builders in the world, we are excited to bring the beauty of a pipe organ closer to the people of Beijing.’

The remaining major commissions currently keeping the Quebec workshops busy are scattered across the United States, from Nebraska to Massachusetts. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, an organ leaning towards the Anglo-American style, with darker reeds and many flute and string

stops, is currently under installation in the First United Methodist Church. The four-manual, 45-stop, 57-rank instrument will replace a smaller organ installed in 1972. The expressive Swell, Choir, and Pedal will be installed in the existing side chambers, and the Great and expressive Solo will be installed above the choir, behind a façade designed to look ‘timeless’ in the space.

This is one of the last major projects worked on by Pierre Drouin, the head of the drafting department, after 33 years with Casavant. He explains that one of the main problems is providing structural support for the centre section of the organ, enhanced by fancy, but heavy, decorative woodwork located just above the choir loft under renovation: ‘We finally decided to add two 20ft (6m) steel beams with columns to carry the organ load down to the basement.’ Installation should be completed in time for Easter 2020. ▶

▶ (this page and opposite) Preparing the four-manual organ for the new China Philharmonic Orchestra Hall in Beijing. (opposite page) Martin Bourdon (l) and Maxime Rodier making pipes; (anti-clockwise, from below) In the assembly room; Jerome Masson making reed shallots; Jocelyn Morissette making a trombone resonator; MAD Architects’ design for the translucent concert hall



Casavant Frères – how it all began



▲ The Casavant console room in the 1920s

Adventurous organ builder brothers Claver and Samuel Casavant set sail from Canada in 1878 to learn from the great French masters, returning a year later to establish Casavant Frères in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, on a site still occupied by the company today. Claver worked for John Abbey in Versailles, and both he and Samuel spent time in the Cavaillé-Coll *ateliers* – invaluable experience which they immediately brought to bear in their new enterprise.

Their first organ was completed in 1880 in Montreal, but the instrument that firmly established them as builders of international standing was the four-manual 82-stop organ completed in 1891 for Notre-Dame church (now Basilica) in Montreal, and it was not long before they were working in the United States, installing their first organ there in 1895.

During their careers, the Casavant brothers received significant recognition for their work, including the Grand Prix at the International Exhibition in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1930. In addition to numerous fine organs in North America, they installed others in France, Norway, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania.

Unlike other firms that relied on the direction of only one individual, Samuel and Claver Casavant worked together, their talents complementing one another. As early as the 1910s, they assembled a team of dedicated people who would succeed them in the 1930s and keep the company thriving during the Great Depression and the second world war. Stephen Stoot, an accomplished British

organist, succeeded Claver Casavant as tonal director in 1933.

In the mid-1950s, the then boss, Charles Perrault, realised that it was time to redefine Casavant's tonal philosophy. Lawrence Phelps became tonal director in 1958. A central figure in the Organ Reform movement in North America, he was responsible for the design of some 500 Casavant organs.

In 1960, Casavant returned to building mechanical action organs, and since then more than 200 examples have been installed around the world. In 1972, Gerhard Brunzema became tonal director, following his long partnership with Jürgen Ahrend in Germany. He brought considerable experience with new instruments and an extensive knowledge of historically important European organs. The organs he designed often reflected his admiration for the tonal precedents of his homeland.

In the late 1970s, organists started to desire organs that could play a broader repertoire. In 1981, Jean-Louis Coignet was named tonal director and introduced a palette where the colour of individual stops was developed to the fullest extent, while working to blend them in such a way that the ensemble becomes increasingly cohesive as stops are added to the texture.

Following the practice established by the Casavant brothers, the firm continued to add trained organists and practising musicians to the staff whose interest and knowledge extended into both the technical and the tonal. In 1984, Jacquelin Rochette joined as assistant to Jean-Louis Coignet, later assuming the leadership of the team of voicers as well as gradually taking charge of all tonal matters. In 2004, Rochette became the fifth tonal director in the history of Casavant Frères.

Last year, Simon Tétreault, an entrepreneur and professional musician, took the helm at Casavant. With tonal director Alain Goneau and a team of dedicated craftspeople and designers, Casavant continues to attract major commissions for organs across the world. Recent examples include monumental four-manual organs for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.; the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City, Missouri; La Maison Symphonique in Montreal, Canada; and Saemoonan Presbyterian Church in Seoul, South Korea; along with organs installed in mainland China and Macau.

▼ Casavant Frères' own trucks, which they used to deliver the instruments themselves (1920s)



◁ They move quickly down in Houston, Texas. When St Martin's Episcopal Church Chapel wanted a new three-manual, 24-stop, 26-rank instrument they contacted Casavant's vice-president Simon Couture on a Saturday. 'Director of music Dr David Henning told me that they were to select a builder the following Tuesday. So, if we wanted to be considered, it was now or never! It was suggested to retain pipework from their existing 1958 instrument but, to be blunt, this was not too appealing. Knowing David's affection for old Casavant organs, I suggested that we re-use Casavant pipework from the 1950s, which we had in inventory. We both agreed that this was a much better approach to achieve our common goal of designing an instrument that would be both warm and colourful in tone. The only missing voice was a vintage Clarinet. When I visited the church, I assessed the existing organ chambers

and instrument, and I discovered a beautiful Clarinet stop from the 1920s. We immediately decided to add it to the tonal scheme. *Tout est bien qui finit bien!*'

Over in Franklin, Tennessee, at the First Presbyterian Church, Casavant is bringing together the past and the present in a two-manual instrument. Tonal director Alain

and we were hoping we could give this organ a second life. After a careful estimation, we knew we would have a homogeneous instrument by adding some new pipes. The way to voice the pipes back then was slightly different from today. I do not mean that we should make a pastiche, but to be inspired by the significant period of our rich history is

'We need to keep the organ's good qualities and incorporate them ... to give the new instrument its personality' – Alain Goneau

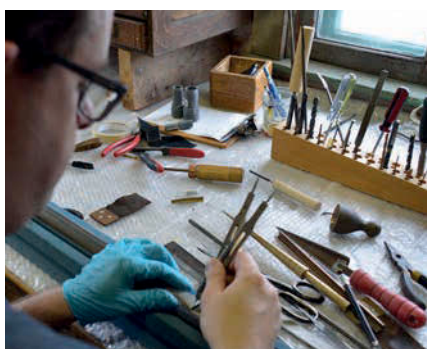
Goneau explains: 'We will be re-using pipes from a 1910 Casavant organ that retain the flavour and style from the Casavant Brothers era [including a Double Flute, Harmonic Flute, strings, Cornopean, Bell Clarinet, Vox Humana and Clarinet]. The original organ had been refurbished in a church in Montreal,

a beautiful challenge. For instance, we need to keep the good qualities of the organ and incorporate them into today's musical needs, to give the new instrument its personality while being as versatile as possible.'

A large challenge to install a small instrument presented itself at the 50-seat

▼ (clockwise, from below) Sylvio Blais working on the electro-pneumatic windchest for St Martin's Episcopal Church Chapel, Houston; the organ for Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Omaha, in the assembly room; Martine Prévost working on the Omaha pouchboards; Paul-Henri Auger making keyboards for First United Methodist Church, Baton Rouge; Charlie Lorteau working on the Bloomfield Hills console





▲ (clockwise, from top left) Jérôme Masson and Mario Paradis casting metal sheets; Alain Goneau voicing reeds; Sylvie Préfontaine engraving; Stéphane Laflamme soldering pipes; Sébastien Kardos voicing flue pipes

◀ St Dunstan's chapel at Christ Church, Cranbrook, Michigan. Sited behind the elegantly carved façade of the original (and long gone) Estey organ, the new instrument 'gave us the opportunity to step away from our regular ways of organ building,' said Jens Petersen, project manager. 'Very limited space, modified Norden meantone temperament, cone tuning, a flat pedal board and the possibility of flexible wind all created the chance for us to think outside the box. Challenging but very rewarding.' Completion is due soon.

The church of Saint Wenceslaus in Omaha, Nebraska, is still under construction, and its Casavant organ won't be installed until next year, but work is well under way to provide a three-manual, 53-stop organ with electro-pneumatic, pitman type action. The main organ (Great, Swell, Choir, Pedal) will be installed behind the Sanctuary with an antiphonal division (with *trompette en chamade*) at the end of

the nave. An ancillary division to support the choir will also be installed at the back of the loft. Guillaume Deschênes says he was relatively new as associated technical director when the project began: 'This is the biggest pipe organ that I have had to analyse. We have had new electronics to understand and to integrate, to ensure the installation and programming will be flawless.'

Simon Couture describes Chatham, Massachusetts as 'the quintessential picturesque Cape Cod town, with quaint, painted wooden houses on narrow streets, posh villas by the ocean, and a debonair lifestyle.' Congregationalists arrived in the town exactly 300 years ago and are celebrating their anniversary by enlarging their First Congregational Church to include a new three-manual organ, with 29 independent stops, and 33 ranks of pipes and electrically operated slider-and-pallets windchests.

'To celebrate their milestone, the church embarked on an ambitious building project

to provide additional meeting and office spaces, along with a good-size organ chamber,' says Couture. 'We worked on the project for some five years before reaching an agreement. It is interesting to see how the plan evolved, from rebuilding the existing 1972 Casavant organ to a new three-manual instrument reusing some existing fluework. Designing a 29-stop organ on three manuals represents an interesting challenge, as every stop needs to play its role effectively. Here, as the organ is used regularly for choral concerts, some 70 per cent of the tonal resources will be under expression, including the solo Herald Trumpet 8ft and the Pedal Posaune 16ft. The "caged rage" effect will be quite astounding in this historic church!' ■

Stephen Pritchard writes on music for the Observer and the classical music website Bachtrack. He trained at Portsmouth cathedral and sings with the English Chamber Choir.

An honourable woman

When classical music critic Sarah Bryan Miller announced that her cancer had returned, there was a remarkable response from the artistic community. Saint Louis Chamber Chorus conductor **Philip Barnes** reflects on Judith Bingham's new commission, written in her honour

The interaction between performer and critic can be contentious, but occasionally a professional relationship is developed and nurtured in which well-directed criticism can elevate the artist to new heights. It's the type of relationship that has been established over the past two decades by the classical music critic at the *St Louis Post-Dispatch* (Missouri), Sarah Bryan Miller, who since 1998 has relentlessly covered events great and small, from solo recitals to symphony and opera performances. As a consequence, her readers are better informed about music-making in their hometown, and no branch of music has fared better under her gaze than choral music, a genre she clearly understands and loves.

So, when Sarah Bryan Miller revealed with her typical candour that the cancer she had fought in 2010 had

metastasised in her sacrum, several leading choirs – from the sacred to the secular – formed a consortium to commission a new piece in her honour. Such a breadth of respect for Bryan Miller is evident from the variety of these choirs, a range that includes two Episcopalian church choirs, musicians from a synagogue – Temple Shaare Emeth – the music department at Washington University, and the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus. Knowing that her time with them would not extend much longer, it became a celebration of all she has brought to the artistic community in St Louis. A typical response from a consortium member came from Mary Chapman, choir director at Holy Communion Church, who commented: 'It was a thrill to be approached about this commission, and several choir members readily offered to fund our portion of the commission fee

▼ The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus and conductor Philip Barnes joined the consortium to commission a work in celebration of Sarah Bryan Miller's contribution to the artistic community

PEARL WILSON



COURTESY SARAH BRYAN MILLER



PATRICK DOUGLAS HAMILTON



PEARL WILSON



▲ (clockwise, from top left) Sarah Bryan Miller, 'not just a critic'; commissioned composer Judith Bingham; Saint Louis Chamber Chorus conductor Philip Barnes

◀ since we are familiar with both Judith Bingham, who has previously written for our church, and with Bryan Miller, whom we know not just a critic, but also as a very fine singer and musician.'

For Mary, and for numerous local musicians, there is a neat correlation between Bryan Miller and Judith Bingham, the composer invited to write for her. Orin Johnson, director of music ministries at SS Joachim & Ann, a large Catholic parish in nearby St Charles, observed: 'I find some similarities in the writings of Bingham as a composer and of Miller as a critic. First, both challenge us as performers. Bingham writes pieces

to Bryan Miller's exacting standards and expectations is not limited to choral groups, but has been clear in her scrupulous examination of every genre, from symphony to opera. She not only knows the actual music, but also senses acutely how proficient and expressive performers can be, if they push themselves to the limit.

Just as Bryan Miller has always looked both within and far beyond the city's limits, so too it seemed only right to identify a composer who may live far from St Louis, but who has experience of writing for some of its musical institutions. Of course, Bingham is not a 'local' but very British; having trained at the Royal Academy of Music, she then enjoyed a close association with the BBC, as a member of the BBC Singers, and later (2004-09) as their associate composer. Most recently, in the 2020 New Year Honours list, Bingham was awarded an OBE for services to music. Although she has written for instrumental groups, it is in her choral music that she has found particularly powerful expression. This springs not only from practical experience, but also from a deep-seated sensitivity to text. Every word is made to count, and each lyric is infused with a sense of drama.

Perhaps it was this marriage of words and music by Bingham that, early in her time in St Louis, impressed Bryan Miller when she critiqued the premiere of *Aquileia*, commissioned by the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus. This brilliantly imaginative work depicts the bones of St Mark, 'rescued' from the Muslim city of Alexandria: an aged fisherman watches their passage, and the ghost walking on the waters, welcoming them to their new (and final) resting place in Venice, just southwest of the port of Aquileia. Bryan Miller's positive response was confirmed the next year, when *Aquileia* won the 2004 Barlow Prize for composition, effectively commending Judith Bingham to American audiences as a writer of true talent and artistry.

Since then, Bingham has written several pieces for both the Chamber Chorus and two church choirs, and Bryan Miller has always been on hand to applaud her selection and praise her music. It's clear that they have

'Composers don't often become friends with critics! But I've come to really appreciate Bryan Miller's knowledge of music' – Judith Bingham

that can be very challenging to the most trained singers in her efforts to create evocative sonic landscapes. Miller writes about our performances in ways that always challenge even the best renditions to rise to even greater heights. Also, there is a certain and welcome pointedness about their writings, a clarity of expectations of each voice, drawing each singer and the chorus as a whole ever closer to the bigger musical idea.' Such a response

developed a deep respect for one another. Bingham observed recently: 'Composers don't often become friends with critics! But over the years, I've come to really appreciate Bryan Miller's knowledge of music, her never failing curiosity in the arts, and her wonderfully dry sense of humour.' Correspondingly, Bryan Miller summarised her judgement of the composer: 'Judith's music is consistently complex, challenging, and

rewarding in every way, so this commission is one of the greatest honours I've ever had in my life. Choral music of this calibre is a gift to the soul.'

How appropriate, then, that Bingham should offer her support to Bryan Miller during her illness through the words *I Lift Up Mine Eyes Unto the Hills*. The composer noted: 'I was more than pleased, especially when she chose Psalm 121, a favourite of mine as well as one of hers.' The text, based upon the English translation by Myles Coverdale (c.1488-1569), suits Bryan Miller's taste, being herself a devoted Episcopalian and lover of the Book of Common Prayer (which includes Coverdale's Psalms). This new version is deftly conceived, allowing for various scorings, from SATB and keyboard to double choir SATB (with soprano solo), piano and organ. It can be enlarged or condensed in a number of ways, never compromising the composer's vision: each 'expansion' just adds another layer to the harmonic texture.

Those already familiar with Bingham's work will find it among her most tonal pieces, but nowhere is there any sense that she is simplifying or reducing her musical language. Indeed, she quotes motifs from Tomás Luis de Victoria, especially in the initial harmonic progression which is redolent of the opening of his Requiem à 6. Then there's the renaissance technique of alternating duple with triple metre, while in the double-choir version there is a marked contrast between the two choruses, one largely singing the text and the other largely wordless. Following a soaring descant (quoting the opening of Victoria's *O magnum mysterium*), this disparity between words and humming voices is memorably dispelled to create the climax, when all eight voices conclude the final verse in true polyphonic style. The composer blesses and bids adieu to Bryan Miller

with the words, 'The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth for evermore.' Upon completing her new work, Bingham recognised that Bryan Miller's 'strength and faith in difficult times have been an inspiration to many of us, and I hope my setting expresses that respect and love.'

This new work was premiered in a reduced choral version on 1 September at Third Baptist Church, and ten days later in its fullest incarnation involving more than 100 musicians, in a private performance for Bryan Miller. That day, 11 September, has for Americans evolved into a day of remembering the past and acknowledging its gifts to the present, and this occasion in St Louis reminded those who participated how fragile is our existence, and commended the contribution each of us can make in our community. Now, several months later, comes the first public performance of the complete version of the psalm, to be performed on the afternoon of 16 February by the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus. Bingham's piece concludes a programme that explores the interplay of 'light' and music, resounding in the warm ambience of Second Presbyterian Church in the city's Central West End. It promises to be a fine salute to two such remarkable female musicians who have enriched St Louis in different, but complementary, ways. ■

Judith Bingham's music, including this new version of Psalm 121 (EP 73464), is available from Peters Edition, editionpeters.com. Several of Bingham's commissions for the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus, including Aquileia, may be heard on the choir's CDs on Regent Records.

Raised and educated in the UK, Philip Barnes became artistic director of the Saint Louis Chamber Chorus in 1989, and is an advocate for new music and women composers.

▼ The Saint Louis Chamber Chorus will present the first public performance of the commission on 16 February

PEARL WILSON



Yorkshire vision

A Barnsley church's shallow gallery and large window presented a challenge when Škrabl designed a new organ. Project adviser **John Rowntree** reports. PHOTOS COURTESY JOHN ROWNTREE

Holy Rood Catholic Church, located on the corner of an open square, is a strong visual presence in the Barnsley townscape. Built in 1905 by the Bradford architect Edward Simpson and his son Charles, it is very much a West Riding late neo-gothic building. Its now darkened stonework belies an interior of remarkable decorative richness and light, and it is an uplifting experience to enter the church – an experience enhanced by fine acoustics for music.

leadership of Fr Damian Humphries, the parish priest, and his parish committee, after considering whether to restore the existing organ, it was decided instead to replace it with a new instrument to meet the liturgical and musical needs of the present.

It is perhaps worth considering what constitutes 'liturgical need'. Though times have changed, the fundamental music of the Roman Church is still monody, where the text is pre-eminent, with or without accompaniment.

It is an uplifting experience to enter the church, an experience enhanced by fine acoustics for music

As might be expected, the church has a west gallery for organ and musicians. It would appear that from 1905 it had a five-stop, one-manual organ, which would have provided simple support for the singing of plainchant. By 2018 this organ, by an unknown builder, was in a very poor state and was inadequate to meet the liturgical demands of today. Under the

Structurally the music is 'responsorial', a series of dialogues between those present: celebrant, cantor, choir, and congregation. This implies the need for two or more manuals, or a one-manual organ with a rapid stop-changing device. Hymnody, in various styles, is present today, though it should be remembered that prior to the Second Vatican Council, hymns in the RC Church were only part of devotional services such as the Benediction, e.g. *O salutaris* or *Tantum ergo*, or the hymns of the Office, such as the *Veni creator* at Vespers. Reformed church hymnody only arrived in the RC Mass in Britain in the mid-20th century, first with the singing of vernacular hymns at points in the spoken Latin Mass, and then, after the 1960s, as a musical stop-gap when the use of the vernacular was permitted. Liturgical practice is, however, changing, and today there is a movement towards more use of responsorial monodic chant and Taizé-style harmonic material. Hymns, however, do not make specific demands on organ design.

The stops needed to fulfil these varying demands are thus a number of relatively mild flutes, principals, and perhaps strings, over two or three manuals. Further, stronger foundation stops and higher registers are needed to expand the accompaniment level from small choral groups to a full congregation, together with supportive pedal stops.

What, then, of the design for Holy Rood? Here, there is the question of organ style. The Catholic Church is universal; no one style is mandatory. In organ terms



ROGER TEMPLEMAN

- The neo-gothic Holy Rood RC Church in Barnsley
- The new Škrabl organ was designed so as not to block the light from the huge west window soaring above it

this has seen many organ styles functioning well in the liturgy over the centuries. Italy, France, Iberia, Germany (especially in the south), Austria, and eastern Europe, not to mention South America, and even the bamboo organ in the Philippines: all have their local characteristics, yet all have played, and continue to develop and play, their part in a liturgy common throughout the church.

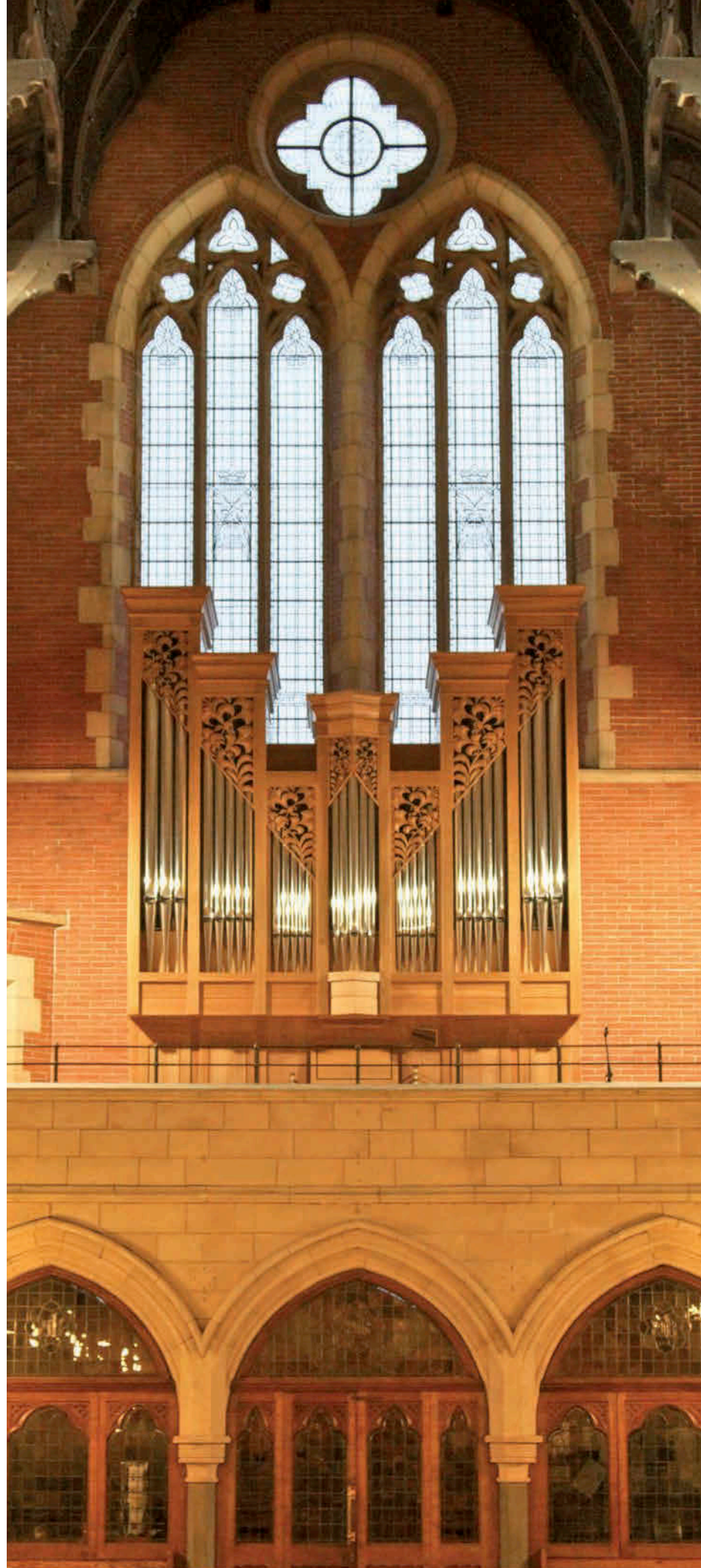
At Holy Rood, a list of five organ builders was drawn up and then reduced to two. At this point, the matter of budget arose and consideration was given to building the organ in two or even three stages. After much discussion, a contract was concluded with Škrabl of Slovenia for a two-manual organ, but with only one 8ft accompanying stop on the second manual. As discussion and the building of the organ proceeded, the full specification – of 12 stops – was built.

There was also the matter of architecture and its constraints. The west gallery location in Holy Rood is ideal for the organ. There was, however, a very significant constraint: the gallery is only 2.5m (6'6") deep. Then, above the gallery are huge west windows in almost clear glass. To what extent was it appropriate for the organ to impinge upon the windows, and possibly affect the beautiful quality of light in the church?

The depth of the gallery, therefore, became the starting point for design. At gallery floor level there had to be room for people to pass between the rear of the organ bench and the gallery rail, so the lower case is only 1m deep. This leaves a gap between the rear of the bench and the gallery rail of 0.65m, sufficient to walk past. Above the base of the case, at chest level, the case could be a little deeper – 1.3m – but not so deep that the player was in the sound shadow of the organ. The width of the organ was determined by the width of the window, which allowed for a long wind-chest. This width was helpful in maximising the number of stops in the space. The lower case was kept at the same width, to allow for access and equipment such as the blower.

While there was almost unlimited height, the organ was kept at the height of an 8ft prospect and with a lower centre to maintain maximum light, but with a low central-pointed tower to reflect the strong symmetry of the church architecture, the strong vertical line between the windows, and also the pointed arches above. The towers and flats of the prospect relate to the vertical elements of the west windows. The limitation of the wind-chest space available, especially the shallow depth, meant foregoing enclosure of a division – the depth taken by shutters when open resulted in too great a loss of depth.

The stop-list came almost last. As the distinguished organ designer Georges Lhote said to a well-known ➤

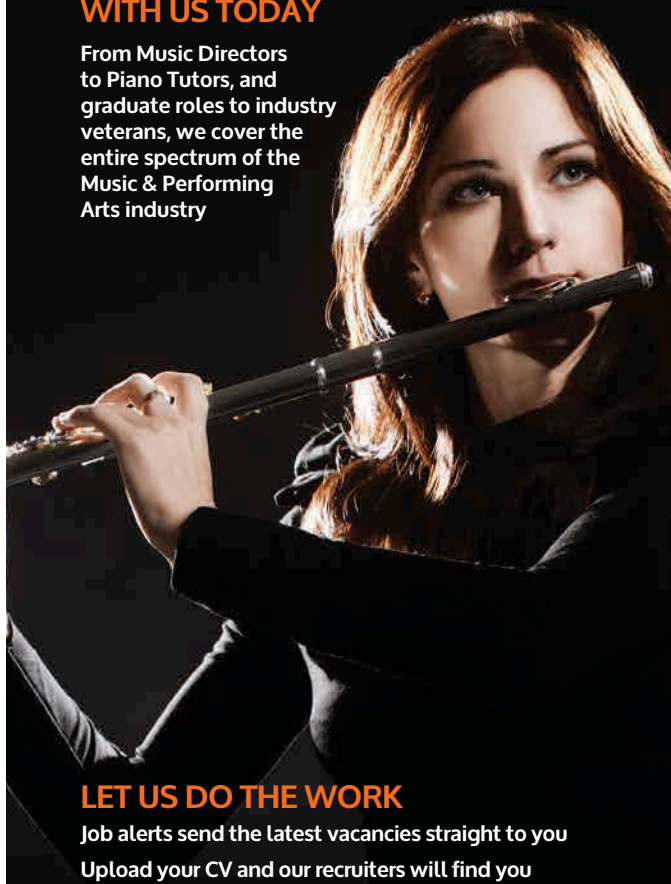


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Holy Rood RC Church, Barnsley, Yorkshire

ORGLARSTVO ŠKRABL (2019)

GREAT

Open Diapason	8
Gemshorn	8
Voce Umana (from G20)	8
Principal	4
Mixture	III/IV

CHOIR

Stopped Diapason	8
Spitzflute	4
Nazard	$2\frac{2}{3}$
Principal	2
Tierce (from C25)	$1\frac{3}{5}$

PEDAL

Bourdon	16
Bassoon	16

Tremulant to the manuals

◀ consultant who, on arrival in a church, immediately began to talk about the stop-list: 'The last thing we will discuss is the stop-list: first is the appropriate prospect pipe length; after that – and only when all other factors, such as space, architecture and function are considered – comes the stop-list.'

It was clear that the Great Organ at Holy Rood would need to be able to give a clear lead to the congregation, so it has a principal chorus from the Open Diapason 8 to the Mixture. Alongside this is a Gemshorn 8, an excellent voice to accompany chant. The second manual (Choir), based on a Stopped Diapason 8 – important to accompany a cantor – is a Cornet Separé.

Because the pipework is all on one chest level and the solo mutations are on the Choir, it was logical to place the Voce Umana 8 (celeste) on the Great. The coast of Slovenia is opposite Venice, so a nod towards Italy did not seem inappropriate. It can function with both the Open Diapason and the Gemshorn.

While the key action is mechanical, the stop action is electric. The manuals and pedal have drawstops, but ▶

▲ The console has mechanical key action and electric stop action



▲ The pipeshades are carved in the shape of palm leaves, a reminder of the victory of Christ through the cross, in old English called the 'Rood'

► Pipework (l to r): Voce Umana 8, Principal 4, Spitzflute 4, Stopped Diapason 8

◀ the couplers function via toe pistons. There are also five free-combination toe pistons with five memories. As Peter Hurford once commented, 'The smaller the organ, the greater the need for pistons!' There are no manual pistons, which makes the organ very simple to operate and means that the hands remain fundamentally in touch with the keys. Although the Great Organ is complete to Mixture, it has no 2ft stop. However, as the pipework is all on one chest level, it is easy to set Principals 8, 4 and 2 on the Great via the toe-piston settings, and also to add the Principal 2 to the full great chorus.

The organ is cone-tuned, and if left alone should require virtually little or no tuning intervention. The

Bassoon, a reed at 16ft pitch, should remain reasonably stable, but it is easy to access should tuning be needed.

There is also the matter of the decorative elements of the handsome oak case. The architecture of the church employs relatively simple mouldings, so the case is capped by complementary mouldings. The elegant and striking carved pipe-shades are an important symbol in Holy Rood, the highly characteristic palm-leaf shapes being a reminder to all, as they leave the church, of the victory of Christ through the cross – in Old English called the 'Rood'.

The result of the installation of the organ is that a director of music is now about to be appointed by the parish to take the music of the liturgy forward. As adviser for the project, it has been rewarding to work with an organ builder, Messrs Škrabl, whose team has brought this simple and modest, though fine, organ into being, and to work with a parish where both Yorkshire warmth and vision are very present. Now, as well as being uplifted on entering Holy Rood, one also leaves uplifted by the sight and sound of the organ standing proudly in the gallery. ■

Dr John Rowntree is director of the choir and organist of Douai Abbey and an accredited member of the AIOA. He has advised extensively on new and historic organs and is chairman of the BIOS Committee for the Listing of Historic Organs.



RECITAL ROUND-UP

A SPLASH OF COLOUR

On 3 February, Gerard Brooks performs on the 7,866-pipe Harrison & Harrison organ at the Royal Festival Hall, selecting a varied programme including Ives, Vierne and Widor. Brooks told C&O, 'The original brief for the series was "The Organist Entertains". In the light of that, I thought Charles Ives's *Variations on 'America'* would make a good opener: its slightly irreverent but extremely colourful treatment of the tune we know as "God save the Queen" is ideally suited to the many colours of the RFH organ. So, too, is Bossi's ebullient Scherzo, one of the finest pieces written in the genre. As 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of Louis Vierne's birth, I'm including four of his most popular pieces, not least the famous *Carillon de Westminster*. And finally, Widor's Fifth Symphony is always a popular favourite – the Toccata is known to all, of course, but equally fine are the movements that precede it.'

► Also performing Widor's Fifth Symphony and marking the composer's birthday on 21 February is Mark Swinton. He plays on one of the three organs at the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, where he is assistant director of music. Elsewhere, the Guild Church of St Lawrence Jewry launches its school series 2020, with performers hailing from Eton College (11 February), McAuley Catholic High School, Doncaster (25 February) and Tonbridge School (date TBA). On 13 February, James Gough, the temporary assistant organist at Wells Cathedral, gives the first of two concerts dedicated to the Trio Sonatas of J.S. Bach. And on 10 February, Thomas Trotter performs his 800th solo recital as Birmingham City Organist on the Klais organ in Symphony Hall. His programme takes in J.S. Bach's Prelude & Fugue in E minor, Schumann's Two Fugues on B.A.C.H., the world premiere of Rachel Laurin's *Variations on a Theme by Sweelinck* and Trotter's own arrangement of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.



DAN FORSHAW

Alton, St Lawrence Church at 8pm
Peter Wright (4 Feb) 01420 543628

Birmingham Symphony Hall at 1pm
Thomas Trotter (10 Feb)
0121 780 3333

Birmingham Town Hall at 1pm
Thomas Trotter (24 Feb)
0121 780 3333

Bradford Cathedral at 1pm
Alexander Woodrow (19 Feb), Irena Kosíková (26 Feb) 01274 777720

Brighton, The Meeting House, Univ. of Sussex at 12 noon
D'Arcy Trinkwon (26 Feb)
01273 678217

Bristol, St Mary Redcliffe at 1.15pm
Michael Bonaventure (13 Feb), David Halls (20 Feb) 0117 231 0060

Cambridge, St John's College Chapel at 6pm
Andrew Lumsden (9 Feb)
01223 355339

Cambridge, Trinity College Chapel at 5.40pm
Jonathan Hope (23 Feb) 01223 761528

Cheltenham College at 1.15pm
Huw Williams (4 Feb) 01242 265600

Chichester Cathedral at 1.10pm
Charles Harrison (11 Feb)
01243 812 488

Derby Cathedral at 7pm
Alexander Binns & Edward Turner
01332 341201

Glasgow University Memorial Chapel at 6pm*
Kevin Bowyer (7 Feb), (1.10pm, 26 Feb)
0141 330 5419

Gloucester Cathedral at 7.30pm
D'Arcy Trinkwon (5 Feb)
01452 528095

Hanley, Victoria Hall at 12 noon
James Lancelot (22 Feb) 07967 806 409

Hereford Cathedral at 3.05pm
Peter Dyke (8 Feb) 01432 374200

Huddersfield Town Hall at 1pm
Gordon Stewart (24 Feb) 01484 225755

Leeds Town Hall at 1.05pm
Darius Battiwalla (3, 24 Feb) 0113
378 6600

Liverpool, St George's Hall at 12.45pm
Ian Tracey (4 Feb) 0151 225 6909

London E1, Christ Church Spitalfields at 7.30pm
Hans Davidsson (24 Feb) 020 7377 2440

London EC2, St Lawrence Jewry at 1pm
Eton College student (11 Feb), Ed Byrne and Adam Field (18 Feb), Ellie-Mae McGlone (25 Feb) 020 7600 9478

London, St Michael's Cornhill at 1pm
Peter Wright (3 Feb), Samuel Ali (10 Feb), Benjamin Newlove (17 Feb), Jonathan Rennert (24 Feb)
020 7283 3121

London EC4, St Dunstan-in-the-West at 1.15pm
Martin Ellis (7 Feb) 020 7405 1929

London EC4, St Paul's Cathedral at 4.45pm
Jeremiah Stephenson (2 Feb), Joseph Beech (9 Feb) 020 7651 0898

London N1, Union Chapel at 6.30pm
Eleanor Carter (19 Feb) 020 7226 1686

London N1, St John the Evangelist, Duncan Terrace at 2.30pm
Adrian Gunning 020 7226 1218

London SE1, Royal Festival Hall at 7.30pm
Gerard Brooks (3 Feb) 020 3879 9555

London SW1, Methodist Central Hall at 3pm
Martin Ellis (16 Feb) 020 222 8010

London SW1, Westminster Abbey at 5.45pm
Alexander Hamilton (2 Feb), David Bendix Nielsen (16 Feb), Nicholas Freestone (23 Feb) 020 7654 4854

London SW1, Westminster Cathedral at 4.45pm
Simon Hogan (2 Feb), Simon Pinnock (9 Feb), Anthony Gritten (16 Feb), Daniel Justin (23 Feb) 020 7798 9057

London W1, Grosvenor Chapel at 1.10pm
Robert Patterson (11 Feb), George Parsons (25 Feb) 020 7499 1684

London W1, St George's, Hanover Square at 1.10pm
Iain Quinn (4 Feb), Alexander Ffinch (18 Feb) 020 7629 0874

London WC2, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church at 4pm
David Davies (29 Feb) 01953 688393

Norwich Cathedral at 1.10pm
Philip White-Jones (6 Feb)
01603 218306

Orford, St Bartholomew's at 4pm
Catherine Ennis (23 Feb)
01394 450336

Portsmouth Cathedral at 1.10pm*
Martin Penrose (6 Feb), Catherine Olver (27 Feb), David Flood (7.30pm, 28 Feb) 023 9282 3300

St Albans Cathedral at 12.30pm*
William Fox (12 Feb), Konstantin Volostnov (5.30pm, 22 Feb)
01727 860780

Shrewsbury Abbey at 12 noon
Catherine Ennis (1 Feb) 01743 232723

Warwick, Collegiate Church of St Mary at 1.15pm
Mark Swinton (21 Feb) 01926 403940 (ext.3)

Wells Cathedral at 1.05pm
James Gough (13 Feb) 01749 672773

Worcester Cathedral at 12.15pm
Eleanor Carter (20 Feb) 01905 732917

York, St Columba's URC at 12 noon
John Kitchen (8 Feb) 07866 145419

For fuller listings, visit
www.choirandorgan.com

* unless otherwise stated

While every effort is made to provide correct information, readers are strongly advised to telephone the numbers given to confirm details before attending.



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David Hill answers your questions about all matters relating to choirs and their conductors

We don't have enough tenors in our choir: how can we attract more?

There are very few choirs which can boast that there aren't spaces for tenors. In case we think this is a modern phenomenon, it really isn't. I remember as a boy chorister, we never had enough tenors, and that was over 50 years ago. The issue is about singing high

with confidence, good range and without the sensation of that being too much of a strain. Singing tenor is something of a high-wire act!

Here are some steps you can take to see if things might change gradually in the area of tenor recruitment:

- Advertise specifically for tenors and other voices.
- If you have a subscription to be a member, allow new tenors a reduction in cost or a free year. To anyone else who recruits a tenor, the same incentive.
- Female tenors are increasing in number. They can very skilfully provide confident sounds in the tenor upper register, which is relatively low for them.
- Choir trainers should work on helping to develop the sound of the tenor section and the importance of the head-voice in the process.

Choir trainers should look at ways of dividing voices to re-balance moments which may require it. A handy selection of 1st basses who can rove in lower tenor territory is useful. Most choirs have sufficient numbers of basses for this to work; similarly for 2nd altos who usually enjoy plummeting

into tenor sounds when required. Just be mindful of the tenors' mental health when doing this, as it could give them the impression that they are regarded as 'not good enough'. My message has always been about empowering them to feel more confident, not less, by the assistance of other sound from time to time. Hopefully, this should not need to happen too often.

Some overall thoughts to singers and conductors for 2020

- Warming up: I agree this process can take too long. Somewhere between 5 and 10 minutes (maximum) is required. Those who don't warm up presently, I would urge them to do so. It will allow people to sing for longer without tiring, and will produce more pleasant sounds as a result. If you have a very limited time available, make everyone 'siren' on a 'ng' or 'n' sound up and down five times, followed by some basic descending scales on vowels.
- Ensure everyone has access to pencils and erasers and that they are encouraged to use them!
- Be sure to plan carefully the rehearsal time you have. Too often, one hears of horror stories of choirs having rehearsed intensively in some areas and almost sight-reading others when performing. Every plan needs to be flexible in order to respond to what is happening in the rehearsal.
- Rehearsals should take place without people constantly talking to each other. It is disruptive, distracting and slows down the work-rate. The break – which you should always have – should allow folk to socialise before returning. There is usually an opportunity afterwards to socialise further.
- Choir-trainers should approach the learning of new music with clearly-worked-out markings and ideas, delivered as instruction as soon as possible. ■

David Hill is musical director of The Bach Choir and Leeds Philharmonic Society, principal conductor of Yale Schola Cantorum, and associate guest conductor of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.



COURTESY ST ALEANS BACH CHOIR

Do you have any questions relating to choral direction and singing? Send them to David Hill via the editor: maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com



In the Austrian city's year as the Capital of Music, **Stephen Pritchard** takes in Vienna's musical heritage from its world-renowned composers to its great organs



© WIEN TOURISMUS

In the Viennese apartment where Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed three piano concertos and his opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, hangs a small portrait of a pleasant-faced Englishman with abundant curly hair and a high wing collar. His name? Thomas Attwood, a composer familiar to singers and organists all over Britain today, who from 1785 spent more than a year learning music theory and composition at the feet of the master.

Next time you perform one of Attwood's anthems – *Teach Me, Lord*, say, or *Turn Thy Face from My Sins* – listen out for the influence of Mozart and try to imagine what it must have been like to be taught by a genius at the height of his powers who was writing extraordinary music at a frantic pace. He was also entertaining lavishly, for the years he spent in the apartment – 1784 to 1787 – were the most prosperous in Mozart's short, action-packed life.

This is just one little story of musical connections that anyone can stumble across on a visit to Vienna, which this year (2020) has given itself the title Capital of Music to coincide with the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth – not in Vienna, of course, but in Bonn. But the Viennese point out that Beethoven spent 35 years of his life in their city and died there, making him 'Viennese by choice'. They claim him – along with Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Mahler and Johann Strauss – as their own.

There will be many celebrations of Beethoven in the course of the year, not least an exhibition dedicated to him and the visual art of his time at the magnificent city art gallery, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and performances of his chamber music in the Secession gallery, home to Gustav Klimt's beautifully enigmatic Beethoven Frieze. The Vienna State Opera is staging *Fidelio* (in the original Leonore version) and the famous Musikverein and Konzerthaus halls will be featuring his symphonies; but it is in the smaller venues, the churches and chapels, away from the pomp and grandeur of the major venues, that the musical visitor can find a different Vienna.

Not that the churches are short on grandeur. The Karlskirche and Peterskirche are both a riot of baroque flummery, but

◀ The Stephansdom's Giant Organ awakes this Easter



COURTESY JOHANN ANDRÉ



© WIEN TOURISMUS

▲ (l) Meinrad Bolz: one of about 25 organists to play daily in the Peterskirche at 3pm; (r) Vienna's Konzerthaus will hold celebratory performances of Beethoven's symphonies

avoid the endless tourist performances of Mozart's Requiem at the Karlskirche (and the bewigged and frocked-coated ticket sellers that haunt the streets) and seek out what Vienna does best: Haydn, Mozart and Schubert masses sung liturgically.

Regular sung Masses are celebrated in the cool Gothic splendour of the Augustinerkirche, performed by the choir with soloists and orchestra. It's also possible to hear occasional choral Masses and concerts at the Michaelerkirche and the church of St Anne, but perhaps the most

(Giant Organ) will have to wait until Easter this year, when it will finally be brought back to life after a 10-year restoration project. Austria's largest musical instrument, installed by Eberhard Friedrich Walcker in 1886, was lost in a fire in 1945.

A new giant was completed in 1960 by Johann M. Kauffmann but fell into disuse when another instrument was installed in the south aisle in 1991. In 2010 it was decided that Rieger of Vorarlberg would restore the Giant Organ and its 125 stops. In future a total of 180 stops will be playable

he was one of about 25 organists who play in the church every day at 3pm.

'We began to do this about 12 years ago. The church needed to raise money for the organ [it has a defective electro-pneumatic system], and St Peter's wanted to give organists and students of sacred music a chance to rehearse or perform in public – rehearsal spaces are very limited here in Vienna. Travel companies appreciate these recitals and guide their groups into the church – that's why we have so many people. St Peter's is currently the only church that offers daily recitals, but there is hope that that will change later this year when the Giant Organ at the Stephansdom is restored.'

There are several connections between the three-manual, 34-rank Peterskirche organ and the Stephansdom. The Peterskirche instrument was built by Franz Josef Swoboda (1870-1934), who built eight other great organs in Vienna and worked for Walcker, builder of the Great Organ. Swoboda's Peterskirche organ was modernised by Johann Kauffmann, who rebuilt the Great Organ.

Bolz is rather partial to the set of bells that Swoboda installed in his instrument at the Peterskirche. He used them to startling effect in his improvisation – a flourish entirely in keeping with the flamboyant style that is the hallmark of a city that lives and breathes its musical heritage. ■

Vienna is easily accessible via plane, train or car. www.vienna.info

Imagine what it must have been like to be taught by a genius at the height of his powers

famous venue is the Hofburgkapelle, where from September to June members of the Vienna Boys' Choir sing Sunday Mass.

The choir was founded in 1498, when Emperor Maximilian I established the court orchestra, the Hofmusikkapelle. Today the Hofmusikkapelle comprises members of the Vienna Boys' Choir with singers from Vienna State Opera chorus and orchestra. The 100 boys range in age from 10 to 14 and perform in four separate concert choirs at more than 300 events a year, both at the Hofburgkapelle and the MuTh concert hall, which opened in Augarten park in 2012.

The Vienna skyline is dominated by the great patterned roof and soaring Gothic spire of the cathedral, the Stephansdom, but those hoping to hear the 'Riesenorgel'

from two consoles, combining the pipework of both organs. All sorts of effort went into raising the €1m needed for the restoration, including the sale of tempting-looking 'Stephansdom-Brot', every loaf sold adding a humble euro to the fund.

A man who knows a lot about organs in Vienna is Meinrad Bolz, cantor and musical director at the magnificent Klosterneuburg Abbey, which stands on a hilltop on the outskirts of the city. I came across him when I slipped into the Peterskirche, right in the centre of the city, just before he began a recital. I was astonished to find the large church completely full. Talking to Bolz after he had played Bridge, Buxtehude and Gounod (and added a glorious improvisation of his own), he told me that

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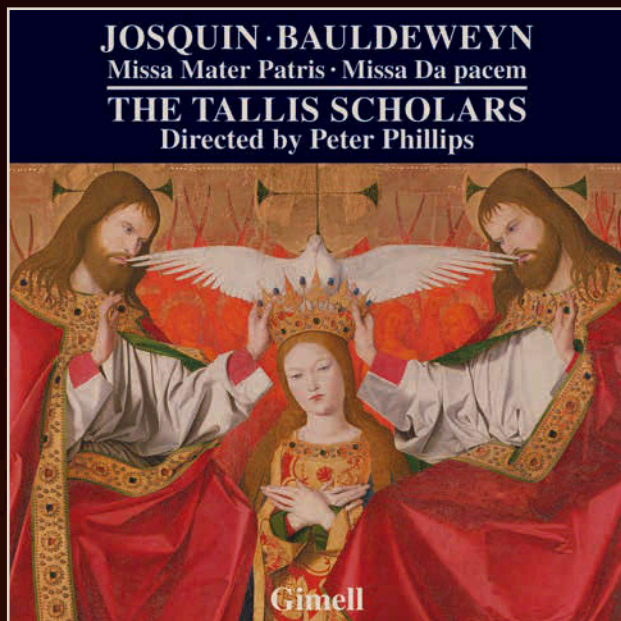
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CHOIR & ORGAN NEXT ISSUE

MARCH 2020

RIAS KAMMERCHOR

From early days as a regional radio station choir, Berlin's crack choral unit has gone on to collaborate with some of Europe's top composers and conductors.

FOSSAERT

Based near Paris, the French builder draws on practices from traditional organ building of the 18th and 19th centuries.

CHOIRS ETERNAL

Past directors of music included Gustav Holst and Michael Tippett: Morley College's choral tradition goes back 125 years.

CROSSING BORDERS

Krzysztof Urbaniak continues to explore the development of Poland's Nitrowski school and its influence.

NOT JUST FOR MEISTERSINGER...

The Bavarian city of Nuremberg reveals its musical secrets.

Plus...

International news and previews, specialist reviews, readers' offers, and a guide to festivals in 2020.

NEW DISCS COMING OUT IN... FEBRUARY 2020



GRAHAM LACDAO

▲ Canadian in Coventry: Rachel Mahon

Compromise is not a word one usually wants to hear in relation to artistic expression. Yet compromises can sometimes result in a fruitful collaboration of ideas. In November

1940, an air raid struck Coventry Cathedral, completely destroying the Father Willis organ which had stood there since 1886. Following the war, the cathedral was quickly rebuilt, and Harrison & Harrison were appointed to design a new instrument. Although plans were drawn up in 1952, these were not agreed upon until 1959, due to the controversies arising between romantic and neo-classical styles within the organ building world. Eventually, a compromise was reached between Sidney Campbell and Cuthbert Harrison, resulting in the instrument which stands in Coventry today, funded largely by donations collected by the Canadian College of Organists.

Aptly, it is this organ upon which Canadian-born organist Rachel Mahon has chosen to record her debut release, **Canadian Organ Music** [Delphian DCD 34234]. Performing a repertoire of Healey Willan, Gerald Bales, Ruth Watson Henderson and Rachel Laurin, Mahon traverses a century of Canadian organ music in the cathedral at which she is assistant director of music. Her choice of repertoire sits more than

comfortably alongside the contemporary instrument and its surroundings – a fact acknowledged by Giles Bryant in the CD booklet; writing about Gerard Bales's *Petite Suite*, he comments: 'The edginess of the harmony seems a perfect match to the modernity of the new Coventry Cathedral.'

Every year, the BBC transmits a live broadcast of a service on Ash Wednesday. In 2019 it was the turn of the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, whose service is now released on the Signum Classics label [SIGCD 605]. Though the Choir of St John's turns its hand to a comprehensive range of repertoire, the liturgical music that is its 'daily bread' is close to the heart of its director of music Andrew Nethsingha – and their 2019 CD of six different settings of the Magnificat merited a place in *Choir & Organ's* top 10 choral albums of last year. Of **Ash Wednesday**, which features Allegri's *Miserere* and works by Byrd, Weelkes and J.S. Bach, Nethsingha says, 'We are wanting to present a snapshot of an honest, reverential service – a real act of liturgy using the beautiful Book of Common Prayer, as we do each day.' ■

CHORAL CDS

Arnold Rosner: The Masses
Blossom Street/Campbell
Convivium Records CR 053

Ash Wednesday
Choir of St John's College,
Cambridge/Nethsingha
Signum Classics SIGCD 605

Cornhill Visions
Nicola Corbishley (s), Patrick Craig
(c-t), Colin Huehns (erhu), Jeremiah
Stephenson, Graham Thorpe,
Benjamin Newlove (org), Choir of
St Michael's Cornhill/Rennert
Regent Records REGCD 552

Hush!
Papagena
SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0609

Janáček: Choral Works
Cappella Amsterdam/Reuss
Harmonia mundi HMM 932097

Jēkabs Jančevskis: Aeternum
Mixed Choir of Riga Cathedral
School/Cābulis
Hyperion CDA 68328

J.S. Bach: St Matthew Passion

Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki
BIS 2500

Mayr: Mass in E flat

Dorota Szczepńska (s), Johanna
Krödel (a), Markus Schäfer (t),
Daniel Ochoa (b), Simon Mayr
Chorus, Concerto de Bassus/Hauk
Naxos 8.574057

Requiem

La Maitrise de Toulouse,
Conservatoire de Toulouse,
Les Sacqueboutiers/Opstad
Regent Records REGCD 551

ORGAN CDS

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Naxos 8.578179

Bach: Complete Organ Works vol.13

David Goode, Trinity College
Chapel, Cambridge
Signum Classics SIGCD 813
(Digital only)

Canadian Organ Music

Rachel Mahon, Harrison & Harrison
organ, Coventry Cathedral
Delphian DCD 34234

Carson Cooman vol.13: Eternal City

Erik Simmons, Mathis organ, Görlitz
Divine Art DDA 25200

French Organ Music from Mirepoix Cathedral

Stephanie Bois, Mirepoix
Cathedral
Priory PRCD 1211

French Organ Music from Notre-Dame de la Dalbade

Matthieu de Miguel, Notre-Dame
de la Dalbade, Toulouse
Priory PRCD 1210

Iain Farrington: Live Wire

Iain Farrington, Trinity College,
Cambridge
Priory PRCD 1218

Jan Sweelinck: Organ Works

James Lancelot, Trinity College,
Cambridge
Priory PRCD 1228

Sir William Harris: Complete Organ Works

Daniel Cook, Durham Cathedral
Priory PRCD 1187



REVIEWS

Rating: ★★★★★ Highly recommended ★★★★★ Very good ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Poor



THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS

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KEYBOARD CDS

**Richard Wagner
Siegfried-Idyll: Organ
Transcriptions**

Hansjörg Albrecht, Gerald Woehl organ (2003), Herz Jesu Church, Munich
Oehms Classics OC 1874 [74:41]

★★★★★



Having already recorded extracts from *Der Ring des Nibelungen*,

Hansjörg Albrecht now turns to some lesser-known Wagner classics and, most notably, the *Siegfried-Idyll*. The Lemare transcriptions are familiar but the overtures to Wagner's first two operas, *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot*, are new arrangements by Axel Langmann. Although not a true romantic German symphonic instrument, the 2003 Gerald Woehl organ has such character that it really brings the music to life – *Das Liebesverbot* is particularly entertaining, with some spectacular aural effects. When it comes to *Siegfried-Idyll*, it is clear that we are hearing a performance from the perspective of a musician used to conducting the work with an orchestra. There is much to enjoy in the technical and musical brilliance of Albrecht's playing.

RUPERT GOUGH

Roulade

Simon Earl, Nicholson organ, Christchurch Priory
Priory PRCD 1209 [75:21]

★★★★★



The substantial refurbishment of Christchurch Priory's IV/72

Nicholson organ in 2017 reinforced its claim to be one of the largest and most versatile in

the south of England. Simon Earl, the Priory's director of music since 2012, clearly knows his way around its well-equipped resources, as evidenced by this adroitly chosen programme. Nimble alert in Andrew Carter's *Trumpet Tune*, he imbues Barber's *Adagio* with poetic poignancy, is thrillingly virtuosic in Dan Locklair's chiaroscuro-contrasted *Rubrics*, and altogether consummate in Denis Bédard's *Variations sur 'Amazing Grace'*. There's nostalgic fun in the Wurlitzer-mimicry of Nigel Ogden's *Penguins*, Seth Bingham's titular *Roulade* a kaleidoscopic fantasy, and Stanford's *Fantasia & Toccata*, dispatched with show-stopping fervour.

MICHAEL QUINN

**Reger: Organ Works,
vol.6**

Gerhard Weinberger, Steinmeyer organ, Christuskirche, Mannheim; Bittner organ, St Walburga, Beilngries, Germany
CPO 777 539-2 (2SACDs)
[125:22]

★★★★★



Gerhard Weinberger's Reger survey on CPO is fast

becoming a leading contender in an increasingly generously supplied catalogue. Boasting the detailed SACD sound and informative notes of earlier instalments, this sixth double-disc volume benefits from well chosen instruments. Steinmeyer's 'Mannheim marvel' fits Reger's music like a glove and Weinberger makes much of it in the painterly contrasts of the op.127 *Introduction, Passacaglia & Fugue* and three movements

from the *Zwölf Stücke*. The 30 multi-varied chorale preludes of op.135a dominate the second disc, heard on a 1913 III/57 Bittner organ that ably accommodates Reger's expressive emotional and dynamic extremes under Weinberger's nuanced fingers.

MICHAEL QUINN

**Theophil Andreas
Volckmar and Daniel
Magnus Gronau: Organ
Works**

Andrzej Mikołaj Szadejko, Wegscheider organ (2018), Franciscan Holy Trinity Church, Gdańsk

MDG 906 2139-6 [63:04]

★★★★★



It will not have escaped readers of this magazine that a very significant

rediscovery of the historic organ cultures in Poland is taking place. The latest in MDG's Musica Baltica series is an ear-opening glimpse into the organ culture of late 17th- and 18th-century Gdańsk in the personae of two significant composer-organists active there, Volckmar and Gronau. Daniel Gronau is best known as a rare source of northern European registration. The music in his unusual chorale partitas is a bit square, but Andrzej Mikołaj Szadejko succeeds in enlivening it through his drive and articulation in a way which Marco Venturini (Brilliant Classics 94843, reviewed in *C&O* August 2014), for all his serious intent, couldn't quite manage. The sonatas of Volckmar are extraordinary in their fusion of northern European *stylus fantasticus* forms and the Italian concerto style of Vivaldi. The rhetorical

spirit of the Buxtehudian (or perhaps, more relevantly, Vincent Lübeckian) Praeludium links their various sections but the effect is quite different; this music is entirely unique and highly virtuosic, not least in the pedal writing. Volckmar was known as a leading virtuoso and as a difficult individual, besotted with his own self-importance. Szadejko's brilliant playing captures the craziness of the man, though perhaps in slightly too chaotic a manner; the tempi are seriously fast. The organ in the Holy Trinity Church in Gdańsk with its utterly fabulous renaissance case, was once presided over by Volckmar himself; the extent to which the 2018 instrument is reconstructed, or entirely new, is unclear from the booklet. In the cavernous acoustics it sounds very splendid, if not in any way 'old'. Highly recommended.

CHRIS BRAGG

**Johann Pachelbel:
Complete Organ Works
vol.3**

Michael Belotti, Trost organ (1717), Großengottern, Thuringia; Christian Schmitt, Leu (1715) and Albrecht/Speisegger (1710/1746) organs, Klosterkirche, Rheinau, Zurich; Creutzberg organ (1735), Duderstadt, Lower Saxony; James David Christie (1735), Cruciskirche, Erfurt
CPO 777 558-2 (3CDs) [189:34]

★★★★★



CPO's mammoth survey of Pachelbel's complete organ

works continues and, much like its predecessors, one is sometimes glad that the variety of players and instruments keeps the listener engaged. The

many Magnificat fugues, not to mention the formulaic pedal-point toccatas, might be considered of limited musical interest, but do provide the opportunity to show off many tonal colours of the organs used. And, once again, those organs remind us how little we know of the historic instruments in the central German traditions. Tobias Trost, well-known for his organs at Waltershausen and Altenburg, is here represented by a II/26 (actually 22 plus four transmissions) instrument in Großgottorn, whose lively sound in intimate acoustics (high in the gallery of a village church), with flues rich in overtones and initial speech, presents a convincing impression of a well-preserved sound-picture. A blunder by CPO, however, illustrates not the Trost organ, as captioned, but the 1842 Hesse instrument in the neighbouring church of St Martini. Michael Bellotti's generally straightforward but sensitive playing is well attuned to both music and organ; of particular interest is his own embellishment of the mournful Ciaccona in A minor, which survives only as a fragment.

Altogether more mercurial is the playing of Christian Schmitt, playing on a pair of organs in Rheinau featured on previous volumes. The larger of the two, built in 1715 by Johann Christoph Leu – his only surviving instrument – is especially notable for its variety of flutes, extending to 1ft on all three manuals. Schmitt uses it imaginatively in several chorale-based fuguetas and the beautiful Arietta and Variations in F major. The organ's aristocratic grandeur (the pedal reeds are no shrinking violets)

contrasts with the intimate single-manual Chororgel of 1710/1746 heard, among other things, in a pair of doubtful fuguetas, one a further completion by Michael Bellotti. Schmitt also performs on a substantial (III/43) reconstruction by Eule of a Johannes Creutzberg organ of 1735 in Duderstadt, whose glorious plenum is heard in one of Pachelbel's more inspired choral settings: a substantial fugue on *Ein feste Burg*. A miniature, though doubtful, Prelude & Fugue in A major,

meanwhile, demonstrates a particularly enigmatic 4ft flute.

The 1735 Volckland organ in Erfurt, meanwhile, with its monumental case (altogether more convincing than that at Duderstadt), was restored by Schuke (Potsdam) between 2000 and 2003. Especially notable is the variety of 8ft colour, the V.d. gamba of the Hauptwerk in particular bearing a distinctive initial sound, akin to bow striking string. James David Christie's programme includes four chorale partitas. His

interpretation of the famous F minor Ciaccona using only juxtaposed 8ft flue stops is especially attractive, drawing the third disc to a fitting conclusion.

Generally, the lack of information about the organs is disappointing; only those at Rheinau are provided with any narrative history and, unlike previous volumes, no registrations are listed. Nevertheless, the playing, instruments and recordings here are all very fine.

CHRIS BRAGG

▷

Bach ist der Vater, wir sind die Buben

Peter Holder, Holzhey organ (1797),
Neresheim Abbey

Fugue State Records FSRCD 015 [74:20]

★★★★★



Mozart's famous statement 'Bach is the father, we are the children' applied to C.P.E. Bach, but this imaginative programme traces the heritage from J.S. Bach's Toccata & Fugue in D

minor (BWV 565), Prelude & Fugue in D major (BWV 532) and Concerto in G (BWV 592), through C.P.E.'s Sonata in A minor, Holder's own arrangement of W.F. Bach's Trio in D, Mozart's Adagio & Allegro in F minor (K 594) to C.H. Rinck's *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*. The late-classical organ is wonderful, sounding clear, colourful and precise in these astonishing acoustics. A most interesting programme, wonderfully played.

DAVID PONSFORD

▼ Peter Holder plays 'wonderfully' in a most interesting programme



Dieterich Buxtehude: Complete Organ Works

Harald Vogel, organs by Stellwagen (Lübeck, St Jacobi); Schnitger (Norden, St Ludgeri; Stade, St Cosmae; Weener, Georgskirche; Grasberg; Noordbroek; Groningen, Aa-Kerk; Hamburg, St Jacobi; Cappel, St Peter & Paul); Wiese (Damp, Herrenhaus); Grotian (Pilsun); Richborn (Buttförde); Herbst & Gercke (Basedow); Hantelmann (Gross Eichsen); Rottenstein-Pock/Mülsch & Botz (Roskilde, Dom); Lorentz/Fritzsche (Helsingør, Sct Mariae; Torrlösa); Kröger/Hus (Langwarden)

MDG 314 2148-2 (7CDs + 1DVD) [9:34:54]

★★★★★



This beautiful box set was originally released in 2007, the Buxtehude tercentenary year, but is now re-released as a second edition with revised booklet and the addition of a DVD focused on the Schnitger

organ in Cappel.

Harald Vogel has spent his career in the service of Buxtehude and the restoration of appropriate 17th-century organs in north Germany. These recordings were made between 1986 and 1993 on the most famous historic organs in north Germany and Denmark, listed above. It is a miracle that this repertoire has survived. Unlike the French repertoire there were no publications, and none of Buxtehude's organ manuscripts survive. All extant sources are copies, many of which stem from central Germany a generation or two later, and J.S. Bach in particular. These copies were possibly subjected to alterations: mis-transcription of tablatures (notes and

Apart from the excellent music, this CD-set is a wonderful tour of some of the world's greatest historic organs

rhythms), transpositions to suit later tuning systems, rearrangements of manual/pedal parts, updating to suit different aesthetics, and even possible adaptations of organ works to harpsichord idioms. None of these can be proved or disproved, but the important questions remain. Hence all modern published editions are subjective realisations. Only the Broude Trust's projected complete edition on two staves will be authoritative in providing all known variants, although the choice of principal texts is ultimately subjective.

Vogel is aware of these issues. Some of the *praeludia* are recorded in transposed versions as well as in their extant keys, depending on the temperament of particular organs. Hence BuxWV 143 is recorded in both E and D minor, BuxWV 146 in F sharp minor and G minor, BuxWV 151 in A major and G major, and BuxWV 141 in E major and C major. Programmes juxtaposing *praeludia* with canzonas and chorale-based works are organised around particular instruments. Quite apart from the excellent music, this CD-set is a wonderful tour of some of the world's greatest historic organs. Furthermore, Vogel makes the most of the infinite variety

of registrations obtainable. Each programme allows one to hear the characters of individual stops and all the appropriate combinations. Of course, this emanates from Vogel's subjective imagination, but grounded firmly in scholarship; unlike French publications, no registration instructions survive, but Vogel is surely right to maximise the possibilities. North German organs are every bit as colourful as the Clicquot in France, but registration instructions were never printed.

The two booklets give details of the organs, specifications, temperaments and registrations used. Essays discuss temperaments, chronology, organ histories, registration, as well as particular compositions. This is a wonderful collection, not that Vogel has the last word on Buxtehude – nobody has – but it provides such inspiration regarding the organs, the interpretations, registrations and performance practices of this marvellous repertoire.

The demonstration of the Arp Schnitger organ now at Cappel, originally built for Hamburg, is a lesson to us all. Vogel's fluent account of its history, his demonstration of each rank, and his performances of works by Bach, Pachelbel, Buxtehude and Vivaldi show the instrument – the most original extant Schnitger organ – to its best advantage.

DAVID PONSFORD

▼ The Arp Schnitger organ at Cappel



BEATE LILICH

CHORAL CDS

◀ **Nightfall: Sacred Romantic Part Songs**

Johanna Beier (s), Nikolaus Fluck (b), Jugendchor Hochtaunus / Tristan Meister (dir)

Rondeau Productions ROP 6180 [51:22]

★★★★★



Within the first few chords of the first piece on this recording –

Rheinberger's gorgeous *Abendlied* – you know you are in safe hands for the rest of the programme. This regional youth choir from Hochtaunus in central Germany, founded as recently as 2011, meets just once a year for a week-long course.

From its sonorous basses to its luminous sopranos the ensemble is beautifully balanced, with a warm, flexible sound and clear, expressive diction in several languages. The young singers and their conductor relish every harmonic twist and turn in 18 partsongs by Bruckner, Grieg, Moniuszko, Brahms, Elgar, Saint-Saëns – a lovely *Ave verum* that I didn't know – the Australian John Albert Delany, and many more, chosen from the vast *Romantik a cappella 2* anthology published by Helbling Verlag in Esslingen.

CLARE STEVENS

Barbara Strozzi: Virtuosa of Venice

Fieri Consort

Fieri Records FIER 003VOV [67:18]

★★★★★



Strozzi's 400th anniversary has not yet inspired a flood of new recordings, but here's a welcome selection of 10 works alongside

10 from contemporaries (Kapsberger Ferrari, Monteverdi et al). Conceived as the soundtrack for a play, it evokes an evening with the Accademia degli Unisoni, and features six flexible voices of fine technical competence with theorbo, harp and viola da gamba. With elegance, charm, and excellent Italian, the female voices balance emotion with admirable control, while the tenors push expression uncomfortably close to the edge. Nevertheless, this cool, clear recording may be the most convincing British interpretation to date.

REBECCA TAVENER

Leopold Koželuch: Joseph der Menschheit Segen – Masonic Cantata

Simona Eisinger (s), Siegfried Gohritz (speaker), Boni Pueri Boys Choir, Czech Chamber Philharmonic, Orchestra Pardubice, Filip Dvořák (hpschd) / Marek Štilec (dir)

Naxos 8.573929 [68:21]

★★★★★



Leopold Koželuch, born near Prague in 1747, was one of

the many highly regarded musicians from Bohemia who were leading figures in Vienna in the second half of the 18th century. Renowned as a pianist as well as a composer, he was also, like Mozart, a Freemason – hence the very Mozartian cantata which forms the bulk of this disc, performed for the first time on 1 September 1783 at three Viennese lodges and full of explicitly masonic imagery and symbolism. Simona Eisinger is an appealing soloist, but the young singers of the choir are perhaps not the best advocates for this repertoire.

CLARE STEVENS

Juris Karlsons: Oremus – Sacred Choral Works

Agnese Pauniņa, Agate Pooka, Ieva Ezeriete (s), Pēteris Vaickovskis (bar), Latvian Radio Choir, Sinfonietta Riga, Vestards Šimkus (pno) / Sigvards Kļava (dir)

Ondine ODE 1342-2 [65:30]

★★★★★



Singers and instrumentalists are equal partners throughout

Adoratio, the 33-minute symphony for choir and orchestra that is the centrepiece of this recording. Sombre, dramatic and haunting, it is a 'prayer story ... about the false paths taken by men and nations and their requests for God's help', based on sacred texts – the litany, Psalm 22 and Chronicles II. Juris Karlsons trained as a sound engineer with Latvian Radio, which clearly contributed to his skill as a composer. These accomplished forces deliver a searing performance of a very powerful work. The shorter, beautifully crafted pieces that frame it are equally impressive.

CLARE STEVENS

Sarah Deere-Jones: Carmina locunda – Songs of the Seasons

Exeter University Chapel Choir, Sarah Deere-Jones (hp) / Michael Graham (dir)

Sarah Deere-Jones FPCD 014 [62:34]

★★★★★



The composer-harpist on this recording is a specialist in the Celtic lever harp, medieval harp in England and the Regency harp, and the majority of the tracks demonstrate her expertise and love of her

instrument. The eight title tracks are extremely attractive, folksong-like settings of medieval texts for SATB choir and traditional harp. The young voices sound more like a school than a university chapel choir in the more upbeat numbers, but I enjoyed the disc very much.

CLARE STEVENS

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols: The Centenary Service

Choir of King's College, Cambridge, Henry Websdale, Dónal McCann (organ scholars) / Sir Stephen Cleobury (dir) Choir of King's College, Cambridge KGS 0036 (SACD hybrid) [76:44]

★★★★★



This is a priceless record not only of the centenary of the most famous

carol service in the world, but of the last to be directed by Sir Stephen Cleobury after 37 years at the helm of chapel music at King's College, Cambridge. It is a measure of the man's dedication that he planned and directed it with steely determination despite being gravely ill. All the familiar ingredients are there, including descants and arrangements by Cleobury himself and several of his distinguished predecessors. An effective new carol, 'O mercy divine' by Master of the Queen's Music Judith Weir, a graduate of the college, includes a cello part played by former King's chorister Guy Johnson. The atmosphere of this very special Christmas Eve afternoon in Cambridge is captured perfectly in a recording to be treasured by all who value Sir Stephen's immense contribution to choral music.

CLARE STEVENS

EARLY MUSIC



Rebecca Tavener rounds up the latest releases

It is an unusual pleasure to be able to devote an entire column to a single musicologist, singer, harpist, and presenter of tastefully vivid re-imaginings of the past. Agnieszka

Budzińska-Bennett is a Polish star of impeccable scholarship and performing standards, possessed of a gift for creating compelling entertainment from early music. There is a welcome touch of theatre about her projects and a sure marketing touch. Her impressively prolific work-rate as performer and artistic director means that a clutch of marvellous new CDs, mostly world premiere recordings, have appeared almost at once, crying out to be reviewed together.

Budzińska-Bennett's Ensemble Peregrina offers glorious solo and ensemble chant-singing, exemplary in style and vocal commitment, based on deep liturgical knowledge. Their powerful yet translucent tones adorn monody and early polyphony, supported by *vielle*, *cittern*, and *symphonie*, for this 14th- to 16th-century repertoire, which includes tributes to Swedish saints and Finnish devotional songs. **Mare Balticum vol.2 – Medieval Finland and Sweden** [Tacet S 248] was produced in SACD 'real surround sound' and it's a worthy successor to the fabulous volume 1 (reviewed in this column in October 2019), inspiring exquisite anticipation of the two discs still to follow.

Music of the Polish renaissance has been on the British choral radar for a few years, largely due to recent recordings by The Sixteen of Latin liturgical works. What about home-grown Polish performers, though, singing works in the vernacular? Here's a feast, beginning with **Sub Ursae – Under the Northern Sky**

▼ Ensemble Peregrina: 'glorious solo and ensemble chant-singing'



SUSANNA DRESCHER

[Raumklang RK 3801], a world premiere recording of the complete works of Wacław z Szamotuł (Venceslaus Schamotulinus). Highly respected in his time, his Latin motets were published in Nuremberg alongside those of Lassus, Gombert, Josquin et al. There's an elegance to this composer's counterpoint and Budzińska-Bennett encourages a wide range of expression from the eight-voice Cracow Singers. Some characterful works in Polish (the *terpsichorean* paraphrase of Psalm 1, for example) are given racy interpretations. Material in Latin includes a fascinating set of Lamentations, and the recording has great clarity and presence.

There's a debate about whether the composer Mikołaj Gomółka was a Protestant or a Catholic with ecumenical leanings. His magnum opus is a Psalter in the vernacular, and to record it all is a major project. There are two double albums out already: **Mikołaj Gomółka Opera Omnia vols. 1 & 2** [Polskie Radio PRDC 2218-2219] (Psalms of the Pilgrims and Morning and Evening Psalms), and **Mikołaj Gomółka Opera Omnia vols. 3 & 4** [Polskie Radio PRDC 2220-2221] (Thanksgiving and Penitential Psalms and Royal Psalms), with more volumes to come. The colour of the Polish

There is no doubt that Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett has brought this repertoire to spirited life

language, so authentically sung, makes for gripping listening, and members of the Choir of Polish Radio in various lively combinations are enthusiastic advocates. While their intonation can be wayward, their unflagging enthusiasm, with a raw edge to the male voices, communicates energy and immediacy. There's a wonderful variety of scorings: consort, choral, accompanied, solo 'lute song', with harp, renaissance guitar, lute, viol consort, percussion. Some arrangements are positively funky: Psalm 129 ('With a thousand vexations') sounds almost Iberian. Today's leading interpreters will challenge with reinvention and there's no doubt that Budzińska-Bennett has brought this repertoire to spirited life. The recording quality has depth and breadth, captured mostly in the Royal Castle of Niepołomice, and the excellent booklets include English translations

While Budzińska-Bennett is the artistic director on all these projects, her principal collaborator, lutenist Marc Lewon (both are alumni of the celebrated Schola Cantorum Basiliensis), is a significant, virtuosic presence throughout. Budzińska-Bennett has recently been awarded two medals in honour of her work: The Decoration of Honour Meritorious for Polish Culture and Silver Cross of Lesser Poland – she's becoming a national treasure!

Rebecca Tavener is a singer and director specialising in early and contemporary music. She is founder-director of Canty, Scotland's only professional medieval music group.

◀ **Margaret Bonds: The Ballad Of The Brown King & Selected Songs**

Laquita Mitchell (s), Lucia Bradford (m-s), Noah Stewart (t), Malcolm J. Merriweather (bar), Dessoff Choirs and Orchestra, Ashley Jackson (hp) / Malcolm J. Merriweather (dir)
Avie AV 2413 [35:16]

★★★★



Margaret Bonds was one of the first African-American

musicians to win wide recognition in the United States. She was Chicago-based rather than part of the so-called Harlem Renaissance, but she's best known for her work with poet Langston Hughes – the solo voice setting of 'The Negro Speaks Of Rivers' most obviously, but also her 1954 choral cantata *The Ballad Of The Brown King*, a quietly emphatic blend of gospel, calypso and European art music, written in honour of the African king Balthazar who bore gifts to the baby Jesus. Solo voices blend effortlessly with choral backings, and the long-lived Dessoff Choirs handle the material with authority and openness. There are two other Hughes settings on the disc, his 1959 *Three Dream Portraits* and the beautiful *Winter Moon*. There is also Bonds's setting of Countee Cullen's *A Brown Girl Dead*, which calls for a different strain of lyricism from composer and performers.

BRIAN MORTON

Lydia Kakabadse: Ithaka

Claire McCaldin (m-s), Choir of Royal Holloway, Cecily Beer (hp), Sara Trickey (vn), Paul Turner (pno) / Rupert Gough (dir)
Divine Art DDA 25188 [67:56]

★★★★



Lydia Kakabadse was raised in the Russian and Greek Orthodox traditions and brings considerable learning as well as freshly accessible music to this Royal Holloway Hellenic Institute commission. The music draws, though in no schematic way, on the succession of styles that dominated the eastern Mediterranean: Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and modern. The aim is not to do music history but to portray the progress of a

human life, from the monophony of early days to the triumphant recognition that destination is less important than the journey – familiar enough, to the point of cliché, but delivered with honesty and feeling by the Royal Holloway choir. There are also songs for mezzo and piano, but it's *Odysses* ('Ithaka' follows the Greek national anthem in the final section) that dominates the set and could have stood alone. A fine addition to Kakabadse's Divine Art catalogue.

BRIAN MORTON

Vie et paysage au fil des saisons (Seasons of Life and Landscape)

Canadian Chamber Choir / Julia Davids, Joel Tranquilla (dirs)
Canadian Chamber Choir
CCCCD 003 [73:00]

★★★★



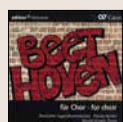
Joni Mitchell had just published her 'gift' book of lyrics and drawings

when this intriguing set came out, and right at the centre of it are settings of Joni's 'River' and fellow-Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot's 'Song for a Winter's Night'. The ▶

Beethoven für Chor: for choir

Deutscher Jugendkammerchor, Nicolai Krügel (pno) / Florian Benfer (dir)
Edition Chrismon, Carus 83.502 [57:55]

★★★★★



On the very day that this CD arrived in my package from C&O, a conductor friend asked a social media group for recommendations of SATB repertoire to celebrate this year's 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, on a smaller scale than the Ninth Symphony or *Missa solemnis*. Here is the answer to his question: a

compendium of original compositions, arrangements and transcriptions that offer plenty of variety and interest. Some are a cappella, some with piano accompaniment; they range from just over a minute to just over five minutes in length. Some of the arrangements were made not long after the original pieces were written (including a Kyrie set to the 'Moonlight' Sonata by a contemporary of Beethoven); others are very recent. All are beautifully performed by this very mature-sounding youth choir.

CLARE STEVENS

▼ The Deutscher Jugendkammerchor celebrates Beethoven's smaller-scale choral works



JENS WIEGNER

◀ main featured composer is Edmonton-born Laura Hawley, but there is also work by 10 other mostly young composers from the country, including the CCC's composer-in-residence Jeff Enns. The choir shows slight awkwardness in shifting from style to style, but it's difficult to tell whether this is due to programming or execution. It's too long a set by some minutes, though it does at least make 'summer' seem very extended. A bold bit of curation, but perhaps it has over-reached slightly.

BRIAN MORTON

Martin Bussey: In No Strange Land

Sonoro, Michael Higgins (org) / Neil Ferris (dir)

Resonus RES 10251 [70:29]

★★★★



Martin Bussey has always treated text with great respect,

emphasising that his music is a 'setting' of words and not an enveloping overlay. That's most obvious here in the George Herbert poem 'Whitsunday', sung with absolute clarity by Sonoro. It might be tempting to drown the words of 'mad'

Christopher Smart, but 'Where is this stupendous stranger' is again conceived with a sharpness of vision that is almost hallucinatory. More familiar texts include Robert Southwell's 'The Burning Babe' and Francis Thompson's 'In No Strange Land', in which Christ walks on the Thames. Bussey also sets texts from the monastic tradition and the New Testament. Sonoro's articulation is near-perfect for this material and the set sustains its dream-like hold for the full 70 minutes.

BRIAN MORTON

Bruckner: Requiem and other funeral music

Johanna Winkel (s), Sophie Harmsen (m-s), Michael Feyfar (t), Ludwig Mittelhammer (bar), RIAS Kammerchor, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / Łukasz Borowicz (dir)

Accentus Music ACC 30474

[56:00]

★★★★★



The exquisitely performed, recorded and presented CD of

funeral music by Bruckner is a pleasure from start to finish. The austere early Requiem uses the number of forces that would have been available to Bruckner in the 1850s (i.e. modest), and the work benefits from the resulting transparent textures. The combination of a quartet of excellent soloists, the RIAS Kammerchor and the period instruments of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin creates a unity of sound and purpose, all steered by the sure direction of Łukasz Borowicz. The remainder of the programme comprises short, relatively unknown funeral motets and other pieces, cleverly arranged to make a musically satisfying sequence. An outstanding and important release.

PHILIP REED

Richard Harvey: Evensong

Amy Haworth (s), Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Latvian Radio Choir, strings of the Hungarian Film Orchestra, Tiit Joamets (perc), Liis Vira (hp), Saale Kivimäe-Bull (hp), Christopher O'Neal (ob, ca), Richard Harvey (rec/syrinx, psaltery), Ene Salumäe (org) / Heli Jürgenson, Richard Harvey, Sigvards Kļava (dirs)

Altus AL 0018 [50:00]

★★★★★

MATIS MARKOVSKIS



▲ First-rate: the Latvian Radio Choir

Evening Impression

Latvian Radio Choir / Sigvards Kļava, Kaspars Putniņš (dirs)

Skan 075 [60:05]

★★★★★



A pitch-perfect choir, which seems to rise to any occasion; ideal acoustics in St John's Church, Riga; and two conductors who vie with one another for honours. Another superb set from the Latvian chorus, performing Pēteris

Vasks's *Songs Of Love*, two works by the brilliant Ēriks Ešenvalds – *I Write* and *He Wishes For The Cloths of Heaven* (a three-and-a-half minute marvel) – plus work by five other Baltic composers of two generations. The singing by this prolific choir is well up to standard, with no sign that they're just running through unfamiliar scores. Ensembles are tight and seamless and the layering of voices within the space gives richness to the audio. First-rate at every level.

BRIAN MORTON



There's a minimum of information on this remarkable release, but I assume this is the Richard Harvey who used to play with the early music/prog rock group Gryphon, but then diversified into film and orchestral music. Indeed, his musical interests and skills don't seem to have any boundaries. Harvey's *Kyrie for the Magdalene* was featured in *The Da Vinci Code*, but here he's less *outré* in doctrinal terms, with settings of the Sanctus and Credo, a lovely Evensong for mixed chorus and instruments, and, in addition to George Herbert's 'The Call' (Herbert is popular again with composers), a prayer and night song by Archibald Lampman, the 'Canadian Keats'. Beautifully recorded and programmed with a sound instinct for pace and cadence, this is a marvellous disc, with the bonus of two pieces by the Latvian Radio Choir (see review opposite).
BRIAN MORTON

Handel: Brockes-Passion

Maria Keohane, Joanne Lunn, Hanna Zumsade (s), Daniel Carlsson, Daniel Elgersma (c-t), Ed Lyon, Gwilym Bowen (t), Peter Harvey, Jakob Bloch Jepsen (b), Concerto Copenhagen / Lars Ulrik Mortensen (dir)
CPO 555 286-2 (2 SACDs)
[79:20; 78:00]

★★★★★



Handel's *Brockes-Passion* is enjoying something of a revival, on CD at least, for this is the second recording to come my way for review in recent months. Working with the period ensemble of Concerto Copenhagen, Lars Ulrik

Mortensen directs from the harpsichord an intimate, thoughtful performance that is fleet of foot and yet always manages to reach to the heart of the drama. The soloists combine to provide the chorus when needed as well as fielding the large number of characters required by Handel. All are in fine form, but Peter Harvey as Jesus and Ed Lyon as the Evangelist are exceptionally engaging. There is also some delicious orchestral playing, especially from the pair of oboes. Warmly recommended.
PHILIP REED

Patrick Cassidy: The Mass

Vivica Genaux (s), Matthew Long (t), London Voices, London Symphony Orchestra, Roderick Elms (org) / Ben Parry (dir)
Supertrain Records 015 [64:00]

★★★★★



Irish composer Patrick Cassidy is well known for his choral and orchestral pieces based on Irish legend, which have achieved widespread popularity in his homeland. He is now resident in Los Angeles, where he is a sought-after composer of film soundtracks. *The Mass* was written in 2011 under commission. Its musical language is blatantly tonal, surprisingly so. But Cassidy is well-versed enough to know how to press the emotional buttons of his listeners; and while this piece, which is described as 'contemplative and peaceful' on the CD liner cover, occasionally sounds like generic film music, it is clearly well written and technically accomplished. The composer and his Mass are well served by conductor Ben Parry, London Voices and the LSO.
PHILIP REED

Hans Fährmann: Motets, op.34, 45, 56

SWR Vokalensemble / Frieder Bernius (dir)
Carus 83.499 [57:25]

★★★★★



The name and music of Hans Fährmann (1860-1940) are entirely new to me. Based in Dresden for most of his adult life, he was an outstanding organist and teacher, and, on the strength of this CD, a composer not without talent, though lacking flair. The SWR Vokalensemble under the direction of Frieder Bernius here present two major collections of Fährmann's unaccompanied sacred motets together with a setting of words from Psalm 126 which Brahms set in his *Ein deutsches Requiem*. There's undoubtedly a certain 'same-ness' to the writing, especially when listening to the disc straight through. The music feels worthy rather than inspired, but Bernius and his excellent singers bring as much as they possibly can to it to show it in its best light.
PHILIP REED

Ēriks Ešņvalds: There Will Come Soft Rains

Pacific Lutheran University Choir of the West / Richard Nance (dir)
Signum SIGCD 603 [71:07]

★★★★★



On the evidence of this disc, the Pacific Lutheran University Choir of the West (PLUCW), under their director Richard Nance, sound entirely at home in this programme of 14 short settings (all in English) by the leading Latvian composer Ēriks Ešņvalds. Made up of

undergraduate students from a variety of disciplines, their warm, easy tone, impeccable tuning and beautiful blend right across the vocal range (I can't resist a shout-out to the gorgeous sounding sopranos) is a perfect fit for Ešņvalds's music. An important release for the Choir as well as for Ešņvalds.

PHILIP REED

When David Heard: English and American Choral Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century

Purcell Singers / Mark Ford, Jonathan Schranz (dirs)
Stone Records 5060192780925
[61:10]

★★★★★



This mixed bag of a programme from the Purcell Singers ranges from Elgar (a characterful account of the popular *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land*) to Eric Whitacre's *When David Heard*, by way of Barber's *Agnus Dei*, Howells's *Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing*, and Britten's *Five Flower Songs*, among others. The conducting is shared out between Messrs Ford and Schranz. The Purcell Singers make a pleasing, well-blended sound, beautifully showcased on many tracks on this CD, but perhaps nowhere more so than in James Erb's arrangement of *Shenandoah*. On a very few occasions does their tone start to grate – for example, at the climax of Barber's arrangement of his own *Adagio for strings* – but more often than not they create a very special choral magic, such as in Morten Lauridsen's popular *O magnum mysterium*.

PHILIP REED

►

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◀ **Kenneth Leighton: Sacred Choral Works**

Samuel Jenkins (t), Choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, Joseph Beech (org) / Duncan Ferguson (dir)

Delphian DCD 34218 [79:36]

★★★★★



This CD marks the 90th anniversary of the birth of Yorkshire-born,

though largely Edinburgh-based, Kenneth Leighton, a composer whose music would seem now to be coming back more into circulation some 30 years after his death. Duncan Ferguson and his forces of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, do the composer proud on this well-programmed and beautifully executed CD. Including Leighton's earliest and last pieces for a cappella choir, three exquisite Christmas carols and a brace of longer pieces – *Crucifixus Pro Nobis* and *Missa Sancti Petri* – Ferguson has delivered a timely tribute to this fine composer, in music that is never less than well-crafted and often inspired.

PHILIP REED

DVDS

The English Organ

Daniel Moul

Fugue State Films (4DVDS, 3CDs) [690:00; 217:26]

★★★★★



The English Organ may well be the definitive history, on disc at least, of a tradition of instrument- and music-making dating back nearly 500 years that can boast some of the finest examples of both.

Organist Daniel Moul and director Will Fraser previously collaborated on *The Elusive English Organ*. That

undertaking, in 2010, was a considerably more modest affair, confining itself to one DVD and one CD. Its scale and scope are dwarfed here by more than 13 hours of exploration, discussion and performance on a lavishly produced set of four DVDs and three CDs.

It's a wildly ambitious undertaking, and not just in terms of historical reach. Filmed over the course of a year, Moul and Fraser visited 40 locations on three continents to record 33 significant British-made organs in an attempt, as Moul puts it, 'to discover Englishness in the history of the organ'.

That pursuit is vividly described in three richly engaging 70-minute documentaries, each focusing on a different historical period. Moul proves to be an informed and companionable narrator, his revealing interviews with other organ luminaries deftly woven into a commentary that aligns the development of the English organ with broader political and social stimuli. The Reformation looms large, the Civil War too, as does industrialisation, the attainment and loss of empire and, throughout, as Moul pointedly notes in his concluding remarks, England's perpetually ambivalent relationship with Europe.

It's an argument eloquently made, superbly framed by Fraser's judiciously paced, often beautiful, filming (the title sequence's frantically edited collage aside). On the three performance DVDs, each of the featured organs is afforded its own 'portrait' and is heard in a demonstration piece drawn from repertoire contemporaneous with its building. Additional pieces for some instruments are also included on the CDs.



▲ Captured on film: the Wetheringsett organ

At opposite ends of the scale are the single-manual Wetheringsett organ, fashioned by Goetze & Gwynn in 2001 from a rediscovered 16th-century soundboard, its Tudor credentials authentically sounded by William Byrd's *A minor Fantasia*, and the mighty colossus of Sydney Town Hall's late-19th-century William Hill & Son, flexing its muscles in Stanford's *D minor Fantasia & Toccata*.

Especially fascinating is the documentary examining the bountiful 'Victorian Boom' of organ builders and a generation of composers who forged a distinctive native signature for the instrument. The unavoidable absence of Salisbury Cathedral's Father Willis due to its year-long restoration during filming is regrettable, not least given Moul's description of it as 'the epitome of the English organ sound'.

Moul's performances cover the gamut from early pioneers to contemporary innovators with intelligence, agility, and a lightly worn but altogether becoming authority.

There is much to enjoy, be entertained and enlightened

by – too much to take in at one sitting – in an articulate, nimbly realised *magnum opus* that will repay repeated attention. A copiously illustrated 64-page booklet includes complete registrations for all 33 organs but says nothing, disappointingly, about the music. A minor cavil for what amounts to a triumph for all concerned, delivering an illuminating treasure trove for lovers of the English organ.

MICHAEL QUINN

ORGAN MUSIC

David Bednall: Evocation of Wells Cathedral

Oxford University Press, £6.95

David Halls: Christmas Suite for Organ

Royal School of Church Music, £7.95

Carson Cooman: Expressions for Organ

Carus Verlag CV 18.042/00, €24.95

Francis Jackson: Five Preludes on English Hymn Tunes

Banks Music Publications, £7.50

David Bednall takes the Advent Antiphon 'O Radix Jesse' as the basis for his reflective and fluent **Evocation of Wells Cathedral** – a motif derived from its opening notes is treated ostinato-fashion throughout the piece, with a full quotation of the melody putting in an appearance midway through. The piece begins and ends quietly, with the obligatory improviser's build-up in the middle. OUP's own marketing material for the piece describes it as 'rooted in the tradition of organ improvisation', and

CHORAL SELECTION



Anthems by Michael Higgins and Ian Venables, a motet by Arvo Pärt and Richard Allain's choral suite

The 'O' Antiphons, as they are collectively known, were originally sung before and after the Magnificat at Vespers in the final days of Advent. Each starts with a vocative – 'O Wisdom', 'O Lord', 'O Root of Jesse', etc – and, by a happy coincidence, the acrostics formed from the first letter of the Latin word after 'O', taken in reverse, give you 'Vero cras', which roughly translates as 'truly tomorrow [I will come]'. All this is by way of introduction to Richard Allain's choral suite, **Vero Cras**, (SATB unacc; Novello NOV 297443, £4.99) written for Wells Cathedral Choir and first performed by them in December 2018. The harmonic language is generally no more difficult than common-chord-plus-one-note, and is used with confidence throughout, raising the work well above the slightly self-conscious harmonic efforts of others in the field. Some movements have a simple, direct flow: others are deliberately more static (the fourth and fifth movements are completely homophonic). While there are some *divisi* passages from the outset, the overall scheme is that the number of voices gradually increases; by the end, the last movement is in eight parts, and these split even further to provide consecutive-note clusters, a lovely effect. The composer has clearly had the original plainsong melodies somewhere in the back of his mind. (Actually, for the seventh antiphon he has allowed one of them to stray round to the front, as it forms the soprano line above rich ATB chords.) The whole work is beautifully atmospheric, and need not be tied to the Advent season. The eight movements might very easily be dispersed at regular intervals through a concert given by a cathedral, collegiate or chamber choir. (NB: the opening tenor solo starts on a low B; some altos need to be effective down to bottom E,

▼ 'A compelling score': Arvo Pärt



others up to top E flat; and second basses often go down to bottom E, and in one place to bottom C.)

Another piece that could well contribute to the structure of a concert is **View Me, Lord**, a short anthem by Michael Higgins (SATB unacc; Oxford University Press 9-978-0-19-353189-5, £1.90). There are other settings of these words by Richard Lloyd and Charles Wood (to name but two), and there is the original by the text's 16th-century author Thomas Campion (this is a lute-song, but I bet there is a four-part version out there somewhere, possibly by Campion himself). Higgins's version is a simple, homophonic account featuring contemporary harmony that won't frighten the horses. The general effect is one of tenderness and warmth – exactly the words the composer himself uses at the top of the piece.

Perhaps more than any other contemporary choral composer, Arvo Pärt has made a virtue of simplicity. One of his great gifts is to take a simple musical idea – rhythmic, harmonic, melodic or any combination of these – and use it repetitively, not for stasis, but to

One of Pärt's great gifts is to take a simple musical idea and use it repetitively – not for stasis, but to impel his music forward

impel his music forward. So it is with **And I Heard a Voice...** (SATB unacc; Universal Edition UE 37 999, €6.95). The text is that of the last movement of Brahms's Requiem – but in Estonian. Choirs shouldn't be put off by this: it is relatively easy to pronounce, and a guide is provided. The piece is unashamedly in G minor: the most difficult thing for the choir is to pitch F sharp against G: and there are two very conventional modulations to the relevant major. But out of these modest ingredients Pärt has again cooked up a compelling score which would be suitable for any memorial/commemorative occasion.

Ian Venables gives us **O Sing Aloud to God** (SATB & org; Novello NOV 297460, £3.50), using verses from various psalms. This is an extended anthem of some seven minutes, in three distinct sections. The outer two are forthright and uplifting, the phrases strongly rhythmic. These bookend a longer, slower section where there is more contrapuntal writing and the music is generally much more expressive. The organ part is idiomatic (a trumpet stop or something very like it is *de rigueur* for the outer sections) and the pedal part very manageable. This piece is just what you want for a Patronal Festival, or that Sunday when the bishop comes to preach...

After an early career as a freelance choral director and counter-tenor, Jeremy Jackman was a member of the King's Singers for ten years. In 1990 he resumed a career in conducting and leading workshops. He is currently musical director of the English Baroque Choir, and the Cecilian Singers in Leicester. jeremyjackman.co.uk



▲ David Halls: his *Christmas Suite* has 'an appealing mix of textures'

◁ there's not much more to add to that, save that 'French organ improvisation' is a pretty broad church, stylistically speaking. The overall effect here is undoubtedly more Tournemire/Durufle than Leguay/Escaich, inhabiting a gently post-modal and non-confrontational harmonic world in which richness of texture is prioritised, and nothing is louder than *forte*. It would make an effective Advent voluntary, and technical demands (beyond a bit of optional thumbing-down on the Cromorne) are not great – a fluent reader could quite possibly play it at first sight.

David Halls's six-movement **Christmas Suite** uses some less-than-familiar melodies – which is a relief. 'A virgin unspotted' gets a sprightly trumpet solo, 'Puer nobis nascitur' becomes a coloratura-plus ostinato movement. 'Humility' intersperses quasi-contrapuntal interludes with bold statements of the tune, while 'O Jesulein süß' is given a trio treatment with running right-hand figuration. 'Winchester Old' breaks the tune into fragments which appear in the pedal, and the set concludes with a French Toccata on 'Stockport'. Everything is fluently and musically done – even if some

of the harmonic turns don't always quite convince – there's an appealing mix of textures, and, as one would expect, the writing for organ is faultlessly idiomatic. It's likely to go down very well with congregations and audiences.

Carson Cooman's **Expressions** comprises 14 movements in a wide variety of genres, each dedicated to a different performer. Many, though not all, are based on hymn or plainsong melodies, and the resulting collection should prove useful to players seeking to expand their repertoire of contemporary music which is at once well-crafted and (in the best sense) not overly demanding of performer or listener. The hardest pieces are probably around ARCO level, the easiest could be managed by those with very little previous experience at the instrument. Registration indications are provided, but the pieces can be played on pretty much any instrument with two manuals and pedals – some don't even need a second manual or pedals.

Banks's typeset and slightly revised re-issue of Francis Jackson's excellent **Five Preludes on English Hymn Tunes** – first issued in 1987 in MS facsimile

– is entirely welcome. These pieces really are classics of the English hymn-tune prelude genre, and there's little to add to Simon Lindley's words in the informative preface: 'Inspiration, ingenuity, expressive lyricism and, above all, compelling rhythms and textures are here in abundance'. There's toccata and fantasia, trio and aria, and the set is crowned by a particularly fine extended treatment of RVW's 'Sine nomine'. Not always easy, but worth every bit of the effort involved.

STEPHEN FARR

CHORAL MUSIC

Claudio Monteverdi: **Vespro della Beata Vergine (Venice, 1610)**

Melita Fontana (ed.)

1-10 voices, basso continuo and 5-8 instruments

Ut Orpheus, MOS 2A, full score, soft-bound, £98.95

Monteverdi's Vespers was a job application, like Bach's first book of 'The 48' over a century later. Bach compiled the first part of 'The 48' in 1722, and in 1723 he was offered the post of Kapellmeister in Leipzig. Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers helped him to secure the post of maestro di cappella at St Mark's, Venice.

You wouldn't choose the Ut Orpheus edition of the 1610 Vespers in order to save money, but if you want a comprehensive, legible score with incomparable supporting material then it is to Melita Fontana's edition that you should turn. One of the reasons that Monteverdi's Vespers is so exciting is that the music inhabits the crossover

between high renaissance and low baroque (to use those wonderfully outmoded terms). Such liminal music has an effect (and indeed affect) that is gloriously unpredictable, yet lush and beguiling. And therein lies the problem for the performer. There are new features and old ones in Monteverdi's music, and the interplay of innovation and tradition would have been well understood in 1610; not so much today.

Tempo relationships are subtle and far from obvious, unless the performer is well-versed in matters of mensural notation. But Melita Fontana's Preface is helpful and approachable (in so far as this type of material can be). Crucially, the very existence of such a comprehensively patient Preface keeps the score itself clean. Indeed, the appearance of the full score is breathtakingly clear, and that is such an advantage when Monteverdi disappears into the realms of demisemiquavers (32nd notes, if you will). At the other end of the spectrum, there are passages where breves (double whole notes) are currency. Depending on the *tactus* of each movement, it is tempting to reduce or enlarge note values so that the score has the sort of homogeneity that we might initially feel comfortable with today. But that would be to rob Monteverdi's work of its idiosyncrasy, and it is that idiosyncrasy that should be at the root of an informed and vital performance. So I applaud the use of the original note values, and I would suggest that working with them gives the uninitiated performer a new lease of life when exploring this rapturous music.

The Preface is helpfully printed in English as well as

▷

◀ Italian. The texts are given only in Latin, but the source of most is accurately and comprehensively given, so translations of Biblical passages are easily tracked down. However, there are two that are liturgical rather than Biblical, and the Ut Orpheus edition is no help in these two cases. The Critical Commentary at the back of the volume is given only in Italian. When it comes to the 17 pages of variants, the language matters little, and Italian will do as well as, if not better than, any other European language. But the four pages of introductory Italian material are slightly frustrating from time to time. These four pages could have been helpfully translated into English. But that is a small gripe; any English monoglot who really wants to engage with the critical apparatus fully will be able to do so if they invest enough time.

Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* is volume 2 in the Ut Orpheus six-volume series of the complete sacred music of Monteverdi. The use of the term 'Urtext Edition' to describe the series will upset some, but it would be worth getting over that objection and accepting that Melita Fontana's edition of the *Vespers* is about as Urtext as you can get.

JEREMY SUMMERLY

▼ James Whitbourn's *Solitude* has 'bright, ecstatic writing'



GERARD LYNCH

James Whitbourn: *Solitude*

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Oxford University Press
978-0-19-353243-4, £2.95

Bob Chilcott: *Times and Seasons – 8 songs for upper voices*

Unison & two-part
Oxford University Press
978-0-19-353088-1, £6.50

Gareth Malone and Catherine de Sybel: *Bright Star – Inclusive Songs for Whole-Group Singing*

Unison, opt. two-part & pno
Hal Leonard 978-1-5400-5505-7, £39.99

Not every choir can experience the thrill of having a piece written especially for them. However, *Solitude* by James Whitbourn is a setting of the profound poem by John Henry Newman, written for the Choir of Oriel College, Oxford, which choirs can 'make their own', particularly because of the options presented for the accompaniment. Set for SSA with harp, or piano (which I think would be better with a larger choir), it was originally scored for SATB choir and guitar. I am drawn to the version with guitar accompaniment (published separately), as the tuning of the score enticingly echoes that of the guitar; but for an experienced upper voice choir, the harp could be a beautiful option too. The score presents really effective contrasting moments between the *tranquillo* and *animato* sections, with bright, ecstatic writing around the text 'to catch the inspiring glow of heavenly love', for example, with its faster moving rhythms and rich harmony. For competent choirs, whatever setting one

chooses, this will be a striking piece to enjoy learning and to programme.

Young singers will love *Times and Seasons*, this new collection of songs by Bob Chilcott. It is based on some fantastic, fresh poems by Delphine Chalmers, who at the time of writing was about to complete her final year at the University of Oxford. All of the songs, which can be performed as stand-alone pieces or as a suite, have beautiful melodic lines that cry out to be sung. Four of the pieces are unaccompanied, while the others have soothing and often exhilarating piano accompaniments where the voices sing in unison or two parts.

Thematically, the eight songs frame the essence of all time, for example, passing through the darker times in *Night*, a dramatic song in C minor, where the performance indication is 'quiet but spirited'; and in *Evening* it touches on the evocative words 'velvet shadows'. Essentially, though, there is an emphasis on light and youthful optimism, especially in *Autumn* with the suggestion 'And be filled with windfall joy' and the uplifting language in *Morning* with the evocative text 'I am reborn ... make each footstep glitter'. There is so much to enjoy in this collection; and something that also stands out – beyond the texts, the beautiful melodies and brilliant vocally enhancing piano accompaniments – is that the pieces were written for school choirs in Japan, Australia, England and Germany. If given the scores, this can display to young performers a bigger artistic picture beyond their own choir and the positive message that choral music can unite people.

As stated on the press release for *Bright Star*, a new Hal

Leonard publication: 'Recent research from BPI (British Phonographic Industry) demonstrated that state schools in the UK have seen a 20 per cent decrease in music provision over the past five years.' Sadly, the research showed that one of the areas where children have no opportunities at all to sing was in whole-class and whole-school singing. In response to this, Gareth Malone and Catherine de Sybel – experts in the field of creating singing opportunities for many – have created this resource of secular songs for schools, which includes *Don't know what I'm looking for*, co-written with Gary Barlow and Eliot Kennedy. The book (all 174 pages) is created particularly for children aged 8-14 and is designed to be 'user-friendly for music teachers, especially non-specialist teachers.' It includes photocopyable melody/lyrics pages and downloadable demonstration and backing tracks. The songs echo contemporary life and are aimed at 'fostering a sense of community and shared values through singing'. They can be sung in one part only, as all other parts are optional, and the pupils can be grouped into 'lower and higher voices'. There are also some very sound 'rehearsal tips' and 'discussion points' included. Some might suggest that the vocal range of the songs is very limited. However, for children who have not had the chance to sing before, I would suggest that it is a very good start. With its meticulous details and expertly driven focus, this is an impressive publication which will serve as a valuable tool for non-specialists. I would also highly recommend it to music specialists considering outreach singing projects.

JOY HILL

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ENCOUNTERS

THOMAS TROTTER, BIRMINGHAM CITY ORGANIST



“When I first started at Birmingham in 1983, my brief was to continue the long-established tradition of weekly organ recitals. My contract consisted of a photocopy of George Thalben-Ball’s from 1949 – typed on a rickety old typewriter – with his name scrubbed out and mine handwritten in. Times have changed a bit since then, but the organ series still flourishes, albeit in a pared down form.

Some people think the organ is only popular at Christmas, and that it’s unlikely to fill town halls for recitals, as it did in the 19th century. I don’t agree: my concerts at Birmingham may not be full, but the average attendance

of 400 trumps many a Christmas service – and that’s without a single candle or cherubic choirboy in sight. What’s more, we operate all year round and it’s not free to get in.

Those 19th-century accounts of people turning out in their thousands for opening recitals have passed into folklore, but I don’t believe it was like that all the time. There’s a lot of nostalgia that those times were better, and that no one’s building new organs today. That’s tosh! True, builders today have a lot less work and only the fittest survive; but look at the work they’re producing. And the market for new organs and restorations is far from stagnant: I’ve got half a dozen inaugurations in my diary for the next six months alone.

In England, the secular organ has always enjoyed a life independent of its sacred counterpart: it was one of the chosen instruments for domestic music-making – most of the big Tudor houses had chamber organs. Then came the theatres, taverns and Pleasure Gardens of the 18th century, superseded in the 19th

by the Town Halls, and in the 1920s and 30s all the big cinemas had theatre organs. Today, most modern concert halls now being built have organs, especially in the Far East.

There are fewer organ students these days, but the playing standard is higher than ever, with a greater awareness of our organ heritage. Students have huge opportunities – I don’t ever remember attending a masterclass when I studied at the Royal College of Music, and field trips were unheard of. But I had Ralph Downes as my teacher, so I’m not complaining!

Alongside the universities and music colleges, the RCO, St Giles Organ school, and the IAO, among others, are doing sterling educational work, so there’s a lot to be optimistic about.

Secular venues today have to find new ways of enticing the public into organ concerts, and having a resident organist or “frontman” is an important part of that process. The Victorians knew this when they created the position of City Organist. In Birmingham, there’s a real sense of community among the audience members, who want to take their City Organist to their hearts. We have a core audience which comes back time and time again: they’ve got to know and trust me, and hopefully they know they will have a good time. I often introduce the music, which breaks the ice and helps to create that all-important connection between player and audience. I don’t think any performer should be compelled to speak if they don’t feel comfortable doing it, but if you do, it pays dividends.

Dame Gillian once told me that every concert you give must be like your birthday which the audience has turned up to celebrate. I genuinely feel that in Birmingham. And though it will be 800 concerts that I’ve given, I’m always setting myself new goals. Trawling for ideas as well as the occasional commission helps me to maintain a fresh outlook. It’s that that keeps you wanting to go on – if you just sit back and think, “I’ve played everything I want to learn, I’m just going to churn out all the old stuff from now on,” you’re going to lose interest; you need to keep moving forward, always looking ahead to the next thing. ■

Thomas Trotter gives his 800th recital as Birmingham City Organist on 10 February in Symphony Hall; he was talking to the Editor.

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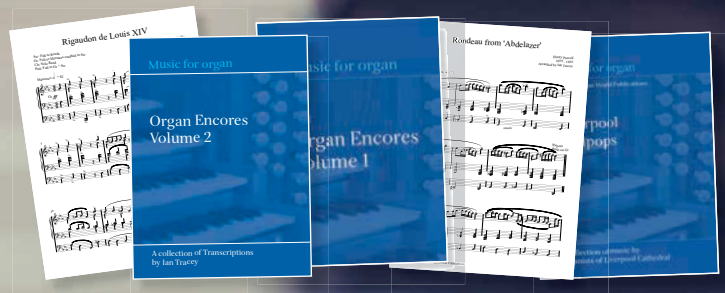
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